柳実冬貴
35対魔導学園試験小隊
AntiMagic Academy "The 35th Test Platoon"
11.魔女狩り戦争（下）
ファンタジア文庫

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AntiMagic Academy
"The 35th Test Platoon"
11.The 2nd Witch-Hunt War

TAKERU KUSANAGI
OUKA OTORI
LAPIS LAZULI

Prologue

"Hey, Kanata-san□. Did you ever think 'this kind of world should just be destroyed'□?"
Under the tree on the courtyard, while looking up at the cracked-up sky, Hoshijiro Nagaru muttered absent-mindedly to Oonogi Kanata who came up to her from behind.
Kanata was no longer surprised that her approach was noticed.
"Many times. When I was asked for unreasonable things by my boss, when I was scolded by my boss, when I was told to do overtime service, at times like that I wish everyone would just die."
"That's just like you, Kanata-san□. Captain Kurogane was a really strict person wasn't he□."
"Yeah, he really was, just how many times I muttered in my heart that he should die."
"Ufufu. But you see, that's an evidence you were trusted□."
Told that she was being trusted, "I wonder about that..." Kanata responded and stared at Nagaru's small back.
Ever since they met, Oonogi Kanata learned just how mysterious this girl was.
When she was still a rookie Banshee, she followed the Red Butterfly Insect Cage, and when she started examining Mineshiro Kazuma's footsteps, Kanata met Nagaru.
Back then Nagaru told Kanata "If you step any further into this, someone will go after your life, so how about we cooperate for the time being?".
Since then, it could be said that the relationship between Kanata and Nagaru began. After Mineshiro Kazuma's death, Kanata didn't know how did Nagaru become the Heretic Alliance's leader and what happened afterwards.
She didn't understand Hoshijiro Nagaru's identity too well in the first place.
The person herself had said that she had an elder sister with Overflow Complex who was used as an important sample for Inquisition's experiments and that she lost her life that way. Without a doubt there was a girl who had the same, Hoshijiro surname. Nagaru's sister was listed in the family register and the documents said that Nagaru was a daughter of Hoshijiro household.
It was a lie. There was nothing but her biography in the documents.
Hoshijiro's house was indeed built, but the inside was empty and felt like paper mache.
In fact, this girl's background was nothing but lies.
Birthplace, age, everything was a lie.
Most likely, the only people who know anything about her are the early members of Heretic Alliance.
"...Hoshijiro-san, did you ever thought that it would be better if the world just perished?"

"Nope."
It was an immediate answer.
While looking up at the cracked-up sky, in a rare for her, indifferent manner and clear tone of voice, Nagaru said.
"I didn't think even a single time that it would be fine for the world to be destroyed□. I love that world from the bottom of my heart."
"....."
"That's why, I need to protect it no matter what. That chaotic world, you see"
Does a person like this really exist?
While it was simple and easy to understand, it was also creepy. There are people who have the motivation to protect a country or the world no matter the price. Whether it's Kusanagi Takeru who wants to protect his little sister and comrades, Kurogane Hayato who wants to protect the law and order, they are people who put their efforts into protecting the world for their private reasons and ideals. Kanata was also the same.
But Nagaru was different.
She protected the world because she loved it. Although it was a reason, it was by no means compelling.
"To me, that world is a paradise you see□."
"....."
Everyone in the Heretic Alliance knew of the Hoshijiro Nagaru's mental defect.
She didn't have negative emotions. She couldn't feel sadness and hatred. Thus she was unable to empathize with others.
Did she not find it hard to live?
Although Kanata knew that she was unable to feel such a thing, but was this world not far from being happy to Nagaru?
Whenever she looked at Nagaru's back, Kanata thought of such things.
Of course, even now she did think so.
Kanata couldn't find a reason why was she trying to protect the world.
She couldn't find a reason why did Nagaru love the world.
"I don't think it's a good idea to give up on our home base."
"....."
"Once we end the war, kill Ootori Sougetsu, the reason for Heretic Alliance's existence will disappear. We'll need a place to go to."
Everyone member of the Heretic Alliance that was in this space called the "Fragment of Mythological World" had returned to their original world.
Now that the war had broke out in the outside world, the reason for Heretic Alliance to hide was gone. It was probably natural for everyone to go to stop the war with all they had.
Inquisition, Valhalla... the Heretic Alliance was too small and weak to be called the third power. Although they excelled at information warfare, they were overwhelmingly inferior when it came to simple war potential. Using

the information they had in full, the only way left to Heretic Alliance was to go for the both armies' leaders' heads.
Therefore, Heretic Alliance required a place to return to.
Standing behind the scenes of each organisation with a purpose of balancing the world, they required means for continual survival.
"...unfortunately, it doesn't seem like it will go like you're saying it will.
The reason for everyone withdrawing from here, is not because the war has began."
"...then why? To us, there's no safer place than this."
"You see, I consider it only a possibility but... if Ootori Sougetsu's identity is what I think it might be, *this place is no longer safe, you see.*"
While Kanata tilted her head, Nagaru turned around with a smile and started walking towards her.
"And that's why, Kanata-san should also go ahead and return to the other side."
"There's no way I can leave you behind, Hoshijiro-san. Please have more awareness of yourself as a leader. My work is to prote——"
When she tried to speak, unexpectedly Nagaru clung to Kanata.
Kanata was upset by this surprise attack.
While hugging onto Kanata, Nagaru happy breathed in.
"...H-Hoshijiro-san?"
"Kanata-san, thank you very much for protecting me until now in place of Shizuka-chan."
What are you saying——when Kanata was about to ask, she felt her back heat up.
As she hurriedly tried to touch what was attached to her back, light had wrapped around her body.
"Transfer magic's instant charm...?!"
"Rejoin with others on the site. Strategy change to plan C. Cover Kusanagi-kun with all you have and stop Kusanagi Orochi and Mother Goose."
After giving her brief instructions, Nagaru waved her hand in a bye-bye gesture to Kanata.
The magic had activate. It was too late to stop it.
Kanata gave up on thinking of the meaning behind Nagaru's word's and asked what she needed to know while she still could.
"And what's ahead?! Kusanagi-kun is still chasing after Mineshiro Kazuma's document you know?! What do we do about Ootori Sougetsu?!"
"I'll buy us some time. What's ahead... sorry, we can only leave it to Kusanagi-kun and Lapis-chan."
Nagaru furrowed her eyebrows and spoke while scratching her cheek.
Kanata tried reaching out towards her.
"Hoshijiro-san... what are you——!"
Before she could finish speaking, Kanata's body turned into magical particles and suddenly disappeared from spot.

Left alone, Nagaru's hair had been carried by the wind that blew from nowhere and she looked up at the sky.
The cracked-up world. Fragment of a broken world.
Nagaru didn't know the reason why has this world remained.
Why have the worlds collided, what happened before the collision, she didn't have any conclusive evidence.
The only one who knew everything was that man.
That's right. The one who held the truth of the world was——
"...let me ask something, Ootori Sougetsu."
——He alone.
There was a presence of a person on the other side of the tree.
His back leaning on the three as he stood, a man with white hair wearing a white suit.
"I'm surprised. To think that you would predict my coming."
The white man, Ootori Sougetsu said so with a big smile on his face.
Nagaru and Sougetsu both leaned on the trees and confronted the broken world.
"Just a hunch you see, a hunch□. Once it was found out that we're trying to find out what's your identity, the possibility of you finding our home base wasn't too low."
"And then you had all the Heretic Alliance members to evacuate? That's quite something. Which would mean, that you have predicted to an extent what my identity is."
In silence, Nagaru faced downwards and heaved a sigh.
"I had no conclusive evidence. That's why I had Kusanagi-kun and the others chase after Mineshiro-san's documents that would be one."
She kicked a pebble on the ground and still facing downwards, she scratched her cheek.
"...but a god, huh. I wished it wasn't so, you see□."
"Right? I think the same."
Sougetsu shrugged with a bitter smile.
"When did you notice the possibility?"
"Since your objective was destruction, the moment I started to think your objective is your own death, when you tried to use Kiseki-chan to try turning Kusanagi-kun into a God Hunter."
Nagaru picked up a leaf from under her feet and while playing around with it in her fingertips, she continued to speak.
"You have relied on the Kusanagi household for 150 years now. And, you really wanted to get your hands on a son of the Kusanagi house, not their daughter. 150 years ago your true target was Kusanagi Orochi... Kusanagi Mikoto was only a trigger to make him enter God Hunter form."
She was glad there was a precedent of his attempt to use Kusanagi family, allowing Nagaru realize Sougetsu's identity.
"For destroying the human race, Hyakki Yakou was enough. And yet, you tried to create a 'God-Hunting" existence. That's not power to destroy the

world, but power to kill a god, right. You purposefully went out of your way to make Orochi-san and Kusanagi-kun hate you, because you desperately wanted to get your hands on power for killing a god."
"....."
"Even though your goal was destruction, I thought it strange for you to be obsessed about god-slaying power."
"...using just that to make your judgement... you're amazing."
It probably wasn't a compliment. There was none of his usual playfulness in his voice.
Praising the enemy must be a very complex thing, Nagaru thought.
She didn't really think herself to be amazing. It was just something like a delusion, an organisation's top duty was to think of various possibilities and move people accordingly.
Since she was moving an entire organisation, she had to make her bet.
Even though she noticed that Ootori Sougetsu's goal was to kill the god and destroy the world, she could only rely on her intuition as for whether he himself is the god or not. Even though there was a possibility of that, she couldn't move the organisation without any evidence.
That's why, Nagaru gambled this time.
The reason she evacuated all members of the Heretic Alliance, wasn't for challenging the war with everything they had.
It was because she expected this man to come over to this world.
"That's correct. I am that world's god, you could call me that world's life itself. Of course, it's not like I wanted to be one."
"...then, is it fine to say that you are an existence from before mythological world collided with the real one?"
"I don't mind if you think so. It's more correct to say that in the world I was living in there was no magic. Magic, is something like a bug that was the result of the world's reconstruction after the collision with mythological world."
"A bug?"
Nagaru smiled curiously.
"I'd like to hear more about that."
"It's nothing interesting, really."
"If possible, I'd like you to tell me."
When Nagaru asked, Sougetsu responded with a shrug.
"From your point of view, this would be the mythological world. An old, old tale. At the time when magic didn't exist in real world, it had science and technology developed to a much higher level than now, and thus they were able to do things that were like magic."
"....."
"Everything had changed when they attempted to make contact with a different world. The different world, was the space you call Mythological World."

It could be said that the feelings she could sense in his voice, were nostalgia.
From the words that felt like they had a human touch to them, her evaluation of the existence that was Ootori Sougetsu had changed in her mind.
They should have... but Nagaru felt something was wrong. Thanks to the defect in her emotions, she had become sensitive to feelings of the humans, so she was able to recognize what was it.
"And when they succeeded in making contact, everything went wrong. Eventually a war between gods and humans had broke out, the worlds collided and as the world of gods and humans mixed, everything overflowed with magic... it was a really unfortunate thing to happen."
Only at this moment, hatred overflowed in Sougetsu's voice.
But it was weird. Strange.
It reeked of lies.
What he said might have been the truth, but his emotions were all lies.
Was the reason Sougetsu wanted to destroy this world because of hatred?
The reason magic overflowed in the human world was because of gods, if magic itself was the heritage of the gods, it wasn't weird for a human of the old world to hate magic.
But he was a god. Was there any reason for a god to hate magic?
"That's the reason I call magic a bug. Magic is a bug born because of the world of the gods."
It wasn't that big of a story, but she understood his reasoning.
In order to make sure of the essence of the topic, Nagaru asked the last question.
"Who are you?"
An existence that is a god, yet hates gods.
Nagaru recalled there was one such existence in the Nordic Mythology.
Sougetsu answered. Quietly, indifferently.
"I'm an artificially-created god. Half-human, half-god. That kind of existence."
"....."
"Among the modified myths spread around this world, there was one about Loki or something. Actually I was never called that and I'm not such an exaggerated existence."
Loki... an incredibly famous devil.
In any mythology, there was an existence that was classified a devil. In the first place, when god's good properties were exchanged for evil ones, they turned into devils. It was one of hypotheses erected on the topic of the parallel worlds.
In short, Sougetsu was a devil of the Norse Mythology's world.
Therefore, it wasn't wrong for him to hate the gods.
"....."
But for some reason, it all reeked of lies.

He didn't match the emotion that was hatred.
"Then can I ask a question too?"
"Go on□."
"On the other hand, what are you? What kind of existence?"
Hearing the question, Nagaru shrugged with a wry smile.
"Actually I don't know myself□."
"You don't know?"
"You see, I... was apparently born in this fragment of Norse Mythology's world. I have no memory nor any knowledge, I just was here right from the start."
Sougetsu squinted slightly. Nagaru continued with the story of her life with a smile.
"I learned there was another world when people from Heretic Alliance came here□. People from the alliance... Mineshiro Kazuma-san and the others raised me."
"...then, that would make you one of the survivors from the world of gods."
"Mmyah□, no clue. I mean, I can't use magic. My body's structure is that of a human too□."
"Hmm... same as me then. Then possibly, isn't your soul that of a god?"
Nagaru shrugged once again.
"Who knows? I don't know that either. Unlike you, I'm not immortal."
"....."
"——Um, listen."
Suddenly, Nagaru moved from the tree's trunk, then circling around it she stood in front of Sougetsu.
And with wide opened eyes, she peeked into his face.
"You're acting as if you hated that world."
"....."
"But it actually isn't so, right?"
Nagaru pointed at Sougetsu with a grin.
He blinked rapidly, astonished.
"The truth is——that you just love destruction, right?"
How about it, Nagaru made a smug expression, causing Sougetsu to laugh involuntarily.
Even though he hid his mouth with a hand, he actually was smiling like a Cheshire Cat.
"...so I've been found out?'
"Yup! You see, I can sympathize with feelings like having fun or being happy. For a while now you didn't feel like you hated anything, more like you were having fun."
"You're really sharp. That's right, what I told you for a while now is all truth, but also just my public stance."
His expression cramped up, he put his left hand on his chest and the right spread out.

"——Actually, I couldn't care less about gods or magic, destruction is my reason for living!"
He said so genuinely happy and then "or was it dying?" he tilted his head, to which Nagaru responded with "as I thought□" and happily puffed up her chest.
But right after that, she scratched her cheek with a finger.
"...then, you are my enemy after all."
Sougetsu smiled bitterly and shrugged in the same manner as Nagaru.
"If I'm your enemy, what are you going to do? 'Cause I've come to kill you."
"Hmm..."
She put a finger on her lips and thought of it for a moment.
Then she nodded and made a broad smile.
"I've decided. I'm going to engulf you in this world's destruction."
Wind blew, both Sougetsu's and Nagaru's hair swayed.
Before anyone realized, Nagaru held something like a hammer with a short handle.
Sougetsu's expression turned slightly steep.
"...Mjölnir... the weapon for destroying worlds, huh."
"It was partially destroyed just like Lævateinn. But, I think it's enough to destroy a broken fragment of a world with a single blow."
"...even if you engulf me in this world's destruction, I'm not going to die, you know?"
Nagaru swayed her forefinger with a "non-non".
"I'd be troubled if you died. The world I love so much would perish□."
"You'll die you know? *Most likely, you're this world fragment's God.* When the God dies, the world is destroyed. When the world is destroyed, the God dies."
"I don't mind□. I mean, by dying I'll be able to buy us some time□."
As Nagaru said so indifferently, Sougetsu heaved a sigh with appalled expression.

Wind shook her hair as she smiled.
"...in the end, let me ask one more thing. What is the reason for your loving that chaotic world?"
When Sougetsu asked, Nagaru made a big smile and spread her arms wide.

"——It's because in that world, there's lots of unhappy people! My reason for living is to save them and make them happy! That's why I can't help but to love it□!"

Her smile was like that of an angel,
Like that of a goddess,
And——like that of an innocent devil.
Sougetsu chuckled and looked at Nagaru.
"It seems like you and I, really suit each other!"
"Is that really so□? Ehehe□."
Then, they said their goodbyes.
"Losing someone I could socialize with... feels lonely."
That really reeks of lies, Nagaru thought, and she swung Mjölnir.
And——

"Sowwy□, you see, I don't know how does it feel to be lonely and such□."

——Hoshijiro Nagaru destroyed the world.

Chapter 1 - Price

When he opened his eyes, he could feel his brain shake.
Gasping in severe nausea, he looked around with his eyes that ached so much it felt like they would pop out.
The world was weird.
Everything seemed slow. The sound, air, even the light seemed to be slow.
He felt he was going crazy just from looking at it.
Kusanagi Takeru immediately recalled the circumstances that had led to this.
They infiltrated the Critical Point in order to retrieve Mineshiro Kazuma's documents, and there they fought with the EXE and Kurogane Hayato with whom they met in there. Driven into a corner by Hayato's overwhelming strength, when he used the technique he should have——Takeru surpassed the human boundaries.
He could remember it somehow. That beast-like thinking, the sense of crisis as he felt he will no longer be able to return to being a human, he could remember it all.
The scenery spreading in front of him, was extension of his state from back then.
While having an urge to vomit all his internal organs, Kusanagi Takeru called out.
Lapi...s... Lapis....
With a voice as if he was looking for help.
In fact, Takeru was indeed seeking help from his partner as he couldn't do anything about his *brain way on a rampage.*
He thought he will die at this rate. This world wasn't a place a human should reach. He couldn't bear even a single second longer of it.
When he thought so,
"—— Ho —— st —— can —— you —— hear me?"
The voice of his partners had appeared in his head.
It was still too slow. It was too slow so it took him some time to understand the meaning of the words.
"——I'll——believe——that you——can hear——and continue. Currently, the operating rate of Host's brain is out of control."
As the voice had caught up he could hear it clearly, but Takeru still hasn't returned to his usual world. The world was still slow.
What should I do?
He only sent these feelings to Lapis.
"Most likely... Host will never return back to the original state. That's just how far Host has crossed boundaries the of humanity. Currently, this state is Host's default brain processing speed."
.....
This is no joke. As if I could withstand this.
Takeru felt like raising a white flag.

"Host's life will run out in this state. There's one solution. Please do the opposite of Soumatou. As you are now, you should be able to do it."
Hearing about the opposite of Soumatou, Takeru closed his eyes.
Speaking of Soumatou, it would be releasing the limiter in his brain. It could be also said to be the activation of absurd strength in times of crisis.
He recalled the every-day training with Orochi.
The training he was made to do in order to learn Soumatou was simple and intense.
What constituted the training, was jumping off a hundred metres tall cliff into a valley. Or rather, being pushing down by Orochi. As he was being pushed down, Takeru grasped the rocks and tree branches on the cliff, then climbed. And once he finished climbing, he was kicked off the cliff again.
He repeated that every day for a dozen times. Takeru was broken on daily basis, he lost his life countless times.
But as he repeated it, he grasped the trick. He got accustomed to having his life in danger and dealing with it.
Takeru couldn't forget that feeling. It was like there was a lid closed on a key in his brain, an image of breaking it forcibly.
Lapis told him to do the opposite.
Close... the lid.
"……————…khh!"
As if closing a wind in middle of powerful wind blowing, Takeru concentrated his consciousness.
Normally he would be able to immediately stop Soumatou when it was triggered, but now that it was going out of control, it required powerful concentration.
Close, close.
——Zzuuu…nn.
Immediately after hearing a ringing sound, he felt bass and returned back to the original world.
His breathing returned to normal, oxygen was pumped into his lungs, and the pain and body sensations returned.
"…ih…thh…!"
Takeru had a horrible headache, his eyeballs were screaming from pain and were so bloodshot he felt like they would rupture, but he was somehow able to return to his normal state.
"The moment you relax it should go out of control again… it might be difficult, but please concentrate as to maintain your current state. I'll try to help as much as possible with my meagre abilities."
It seemed like it was true that his brain going berserk was the default state, if he doesn't hold down the lid he would enter that state again.
He nodded in his brain in response to Lapis' words and looked up in order to understand their current situation.
"——Takeru, did you wake up?!"
Ouka's voice had entered his ears, Takeru tried to reply.

But, he bit his tongue at full strength.
"Agh… w-what is it?"
His body was shaking up and down.
Apparently Takeru was being given a piggyback ride by Ouka and she ran at full power while carrying him.
"Ouka, why are you in such hurr——"
"Sorry, but I have no time to explain the situation! You'll bite off your tongue so clench your teeth!"
Ignoring the state he was in, Ouka sprinted as fast as she could.
As a man, being given a piggyback ride by a woman, Takeru felt a little miserable.
Just how much time has passed since his battle with Kurogane Hayato?
What happened to Mineshiro Kazuma's document?
While he felt disappointed in himself for fainting, Takeru turned his head to look behind, and there,
——Something, something like a pitch black storm was approaching from behind them.
"...w-what's that..."
Being frightened was the right thing to do.
Behind Ouka, there was Mari and Usagi, Ikaruga and Kyouya.
Everyone ran desperately, their faces pale.
"It's Akashic Hazard, yes, that Akashic Hazard! The one where you get a tour of heavens just by touching it!"
With flight rings expanded on her ankles, Mari who was flying beside Takeru shouted.
"Then, ever since I lost consciousness..."
"Not even five minutes passed, you damn early riser...!"
Kyouya who came right beside him said with a grumpy expression.
"Five minutes?! Only five minutes passed since then?!"
"That's right. As you can see, we're out of time and in middle of escaping from Akashic Hazard."
Ikaruga carried on Kyouya's back spoke in the usual, languid manner.
"Out of time... then, the operation failed... what happened to Kurogane-san?"
"We successfully recovered the document. Kurogane Hayato is... I don't know. It seems like he remained there in order to let us escape, normally there would be no saving him."
"....."
Takeru's memory from what happened after that final blow was all gone.
But he didn't think he was able to win against Kurogane Hayato with that blow. The reason Hayato remained there, was probably to turn someone's attention to himself so that 35th platoon can escape.
Honestly speaking, Takeru had mixed feelings.
He and Hayato couldn't understand each other. With conflicting beliefs, they couldn't proceed in the same direction.

Wasn't there any different ending for that? He felt regret first and foremost.
"Also in order not to waste captain Kurogane's act, we need to bring this document back no matter what..."
"In short, we're in danger...!"
Yeah, Ouka nodded while running.
Mari seemed to have been exhausted by fierce combat, Ouka was also injured. Kyouya too received Hayato's blow and hasn't fully recovered. Moreover, he was carrying Ikaruga.
And,
"Haa, haa..."
The problem was Usagi. Her basic motor skill weren't bad, but sprinting while carrying a big gun wasn't an easy task.
"Usagi! You okay?"
When Takeru called out to her, Usagi raised her weary face and tried to respond.
"I arm arr righ——wah?!!"
Her foot hit a raised tile on the ground and she was about to fall.
At the same time he saw Usagi roll violently on the ground, Takeru jumped off Ouka's back.
——Make it in time!
He triggered Soumatou. Overusing all the muscles in his body, he kicked off the ground at full power.
"Host! Don't!"
Although he could hear Lapis' voice stopping him, Takeru was just a moment faster.
The movement in his surroundings slowed down——no, stopped completely.
As he moved his body in this state, Takeru's consciousness shook violently.
"Ugh——ghhh...!"
Feeling as if his brain burn out was inserted into a liquid iron, Takeru released Soumatou in the same way as earlier and fell on his knees.
Everyone who ran turned around and tried to run over to Takeru and Usagi.
Usagi tried to raise herself seeing Takeru run over to her, but probably because she injured her knee she couldn't move.
If he stops here, he won't make it. The Akashic Hazard was looming right in front of him. There were at most three seconds left until it reaches her.
If he didn't use Soumatou, Usagi wouldn't——!
He shook off the pain and tried to move forward again.
Then leaped extending his hand to Usagi.
A vortex of darkness approached from behind to swallow Usagi.
On the brink of not making it, when Takeru's had was about to touch Usagi.
——She disappeared from in front of him.
"?!!"
His outstretched hand cut the air.
Immediately after, Akashic Hazard approached him, assaulting his body like a tsunami.

I can't avoid this.
Takeru prepared himself for death.
"——Reckless as ever, aren't you."
At the same time as he could hear a man's voice, his left arm was pulled up.
Takeru's body vigorously soared upwards until it finally stopped only when he was about to reach the clouds.
Looking down at the Critical Point swallowed up by the Akashic Hazard, Takeru confirmed the identity of the person who pulled him up.
"By a hair's breadth."
Pulling Takeru's arm while straddling a broom-type flight device, was an owner of almond eyes and platinum-blonde hair.
Pureblood Party's Seventh Squad's captain, a member of Heretic Alliance, Sage.
The reason it seemed like Usagi disappeared, was because one of his subordinates pulled her up into the sky.
He could see the other members of the seventh squad who put his fellow members from the 35th platoon on the flight devices.
"Everyone safe?!"
When Takeru called out, everyone confirmed they're safe. Just one person, Kyouya, was hanging from a flight device because there was no space for him on the broom.
"All right, seems like it!"
"Does this look like I'm safe to you?! Damn you Kusanagii——WooAOAAhhh?!"
Ignoring Kyouya who was trailing behind the broom on the strong wind, Takeru looked up at Sage who helped him.
"You guys... weren't you involved in a different mission?"
"The schedule changed. Our new mission was rescuing you guys. I'm glad we made it."
Sage pulled up Takeru and sat him down on the back of the device.
Takeru breathed out with relief and cancelled the Witch Hunter form.
"...you've saved us. If not for you we would have been inside Sanctuary by now."
When he pat Sage's shoulder and thanked him, he heard "don't mind it" in response.
"By schedule change you mean... what happened?"
"Ah. Everyone from the Heretic Alliance had evacuated from the headquarters. Currently, they have all returned here."
"Everyone?"
"...correction. Hoshijiro-dono's whereabouts are unknown. According to Oonogi-dono she remained in the headquarters alone, but we know nothing but that... the connection was lost."
Surprised, Takeru squinted.
He had no clue what was the reason for evacuating the alliance members' from the base in another world, nor Nagaru's reason for remaining alone.

Although he knew it can't be helped even if he thinks about it, there was no doubt something abnormal was going on.
"Kusanagi, did you succeed with your mission? I've heard you were chasing after a document."
"...yeah, somehow."
He had no clue whether that could be called a success, but it was a fact they secured the document.
"We'll confirm it later. Let's hurry now."
Sage started to increase flight speed.
"We need to hide for now. There's a need of discussing the future course of action. There was a change in the world during your mission."
"Did the enemy move?"
They pierced through the clouds and when rose to an altitude where they could see the cityscape under them, Sage said.
"Valhalla appeared near the Inquisition's headquarters——right now, the city turned into hell."
At the same time as Takeru gasped, he saw the buildings lined up in the distance.
Explosions and pillars of smoke were rising from everywhere.
The city he used to live in, was wrapped in flames.

□□□

The flames wrapped around the city in a mere moment.
A surprise attack that used transfer magic was enough to confuse the Spriggans who were defending the city.
Inquisitors were told in advance that enemy can use transfer magic, so they used goggles and Dragoon cameras with analysis filters in order to find signs of transfer.
However, the enemies weren't so few in number that would enable inquisitors to cope with them.
As if ambushing them from the shadows, the sorcerers appeared from underground and had the inquisitors at their mercy.
The elusive sorcerers launched an attack while riding flight devices.
They indiscriminately attacked the ground.
This place, was 18th line of defence near the main station, at this hour it was crowded with office workers and students returning home from work and school.

So fast the evacuation couldn't catch up to it, everyone flocked to the shelters like moths to flame.
"If they knew this would happen, why didn't the higher-ups prioritize evacuation of the civilians...?! It's impossible to accommodate everyone in the shelters!"
One of the Seelies calling for people to evacuate ran against the crowd.
Inquisition headquarters' shelter was sturdy enough to survive nuclear bomb attack, but it wasn't large enough to let the entire city in. Moreover, in this confusing situation where they have received a surprise attack with transfer magic, they couldn't even guide people in there properly.
Enemy appeared in the city using transfer magic. It hardly made any sense to form defence lines. There was no better magic to break through the bases than transfer magic.
"Notification from the EXE. Ignore civilians' evacuation and take the headquarters' defence as priority, the frontline troops are to focus on annihilating the enemy."
"You must be joking! What kind of inquisitor I'd be if I ignored this!"
Ignoring the orders from above, the Seelie moved.
While raising in his arms a woman who received a magic bullet in her back, he took out a magical power-neutralizing agent and injected it into woman's neck. What was scary about magic bullets wasn't power, but the toxicity. Ordinary humans have a rejection reaction upon intrusion of magic power in their blood and die.
The Seelie tried to move the woman into the first aid station near the station, but he was rendered speechless at the sight in front of him.
Countless injured people and bodies filled the main street. Even now the attack continued and numerous witches filled the sky.
Unlike during combat at the border, this place was overflowing with civilians.
Although unwilling, he was reminded of the fact that war had began.
A sorcerer in a red robe noticed the Seelie and started covering magical power at the tip of a wand.
The Seelie, unable to do anything, in the middle of despair had looked up at the army of enemies.
"——Fire simultaneously! Shoot them down!"
But that's when, from behind the Seelie came a sweep of machine gun fire.
A storm of bullets passed by him and rained on the enemy, the Seelie could see the sorcerers who were looking down at him scatter.
When he looked back, he saw a task force of Dragoons who slipped in to protect the Seelie and the civilians.
"Ignore the orders from above! The Fifth Armoured Corps will become a shield protecting the civilians!"
"Roger that!"
Firing a barrage of bullets from miniguns, the captain of the Fifth Armoured Riot Police Corps and his colleagues rushed in using Dragoons.

The mediocre sorcerers were unable to deal any damage to Dragoon's armour. Moreover, the Fifth Armoured Riot Police Corps was a troop made of elite Spriggans. In inquisition their proficiency in manoeuvring the Dragoons was top class even though they used outdated versions of the machines.
"We'll defend this shelter with our lives! The evacuation corps lead out as many civilians as possible!"
The captain unit pierced the ground with huge shield mounted on the right arm and raised the rifle.
The Seelie held down his fluttering hair with his hand and felt faint hope in his heart.
Although the entire Inquisition was integrated under the command of EXE, not everyone was convinced by that.
Spriggan duties. Seelie duties. Banshee duties. Not forgetting those and their pride, there were a lot of people who have challenged this battle.
Seeing the inquisitors coming with reinforcement, the captain of the sorcerers in the sky clicked his tongue.
"Don't falter! We have the air superiority! The enemy are stupid mechanical dolls with only defence and firepower! Rearguard prepare activation for large-scale magic and blow them up! Vanguards divert enemy's attention and protect the rear!"
The sorcerers on the brooms flew in the sky like bees and began a diversionary attack on the Dragoon troop.
The witches from the rearguard landed on a building's roof and expanded a huge magical circle.
"At two o'clock, on top of the building's rooftop, enemy's magical power reaction is increasing!"
"Target the building's rooftop, all machines fire! Interrupt the large magic!"
The Dragoons directed all firepower towards the building's roof.
But, it didn't reach. Not only it was outside of the range, a barrier was stretched out, there was no way for the bullets to reach.
"!! All units, cover me!"
The captain machine discarded the minigun and shield, the caterpillar's rotated and it rushed at breakneck speed towards the building.
As ordered, his subordinates fired all the missiles from the pods on their shoulders to cover the captain unit.
The sorcerers didn't remain silent either. They realized the suicide attack and fired magic bullets at the captain machine all at once.
"UOOOOOOOOOOOHH!!"
The captain unit passed through the barrage of magic bullets, arrived at the bottom of the building and ignited the thrusters to jumping to the roof.
Intending to burn out all the energy, he climbed up to the roof's building.
Appearing in front of him, was the enemy captain.
"I won't let you!"

The enemy captain expanded five-layered defensive magic and spread his arms as to protect the witches on the building.
At the same time, the captain machine spread magic-diminishing chaff and sent a hit towards the barrier with the Dragoon's right fist.
Although he broke through two layers, the first didn't pierce the magic.
That's when——the magic on the rooftop was completed.
"This is bad——!"
Expecting the activation of large-scale magic, the captain of Fifth Armoured Riot Police Corps clenched his teeth.
And the moment a smile appeared on enemy captain's face.
——A bullet pierced his back.
"Imp-ossi...ble..."
Suddenly struck by assassin's bullet, the sorcerers' captain crashed down.
The witches who were building up the magical circle on the roof had also evaporated, caught up in a huge explosion.
The captain machine suppressed the booster and landed on the ground, then looked in the vicinity of the building's roof.
He could see five flight-type Dragoons hiding themselves with optical camouflage.
"We're the Sixth Covert Mobile Troop. It seems like Spriggans have a proper commander... leave the sky to us."
Cover Mobile... it was a generic name for Banshee's Dragoon troops. They were mostly social outcasts who never appeared, but it seemed like they intended to protect the city despite the higher-ups orders.
The Banshee and Spriggan discord was famous in the Inquisition, but the man in the captain unit wasn't as rude as to bring such a thing up in this situation.
"Thank you for the reinforcements. We, Spriggans shall take care of protecting the shelter."
In response to the captain unit's words, the Covert Mobile Troop's cameras flickered and their machines once again melted into the sky.
We'll protect everyone.
All of their hearts were as one.
They didn't think they will be able to protect the entirety of this city. But, they wanted to save as many people as they can with their own hands.
Although they were only inquisitors, it wasn't that they were clinging to their own interests and positions.
"Listen, Fifth Armoured Riot Police. We'll protect them... with our own hands!"
With hope dwelling in his chest, the captain gave orders to his subordinates.
His subordinates gasped, and——started screaming in agony.
When feeling a chill, the captain directed the Dragoon's body towards the shelter, along with his comrades participating in defence the entrance to the shelter exploded.

The civilians gathered for evacuation, the troop carrying out the evacuation, the Seelies who were trying to rescue injured people, all of them were wiped out in an instant.
The captain stood dazed as he stared at the collapsing shelter.
In the middle of frustration from losing the ones he was trying to protect, the captain found a figure.
A giant shaped like an ancient knight stood there clad in magical power, holding a gun shaped like a sword.
「Einherjar」... an ancient warrior revived with summoning magic.
There's no way he could forget it. Several months ago during the incident with Hyakki Yakou, he too had witnessed this threat.
——GRRRUOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!
Raising a war cry, the mechanical hero fired a sweep of magical power.
In front of the overwhelming power and violence, the captain looked down from the cockpit.
Then, he removed most of the weapons and purged the armour as well.
He expanded high-vibration blades on both arms and raised them up.
「"YOU SON OF A BITCCHHHHHHHHHHH!!」
The captain unit started to rush towards the Einherjar.
There was no hope remaining, no fighting spirit, all of it was shattered in an instant.
What was remaining, were chagrin and fury.
The Einherjar noticed the captain machine's approach and directed the sword-shaped railgun at it.
And, after converging magical power into a magic bullet incomparable to that of the sorcerers, fired at the captain unit.

□□□

Looking down on the battle at the 18th line of defence from a tower that was the symbol of the city, were Valhalla leaders, Kusanagi Orochi and Mother Goose.
With the surprise attack's success, the battle was being advantageous to Valhalla. It was as if the Inquisition's side didn't make any commands in response to the surprise attack.
"Everything is going according to the plan, but it's quite disappointing. I didn't expect to succeed this easily."
"....."

"...you look discontent, Host."
Mother looked sideways towards Orochi who was looking at the current status of the battle, then asked.
Staring at the slaughter underneath with his unseeing eyes, Orochi snorted.
"Their chain of command is all over... the underlings act on their sense of justice and ignore the orders. Even though they're skilled individually, the dorks ain't have any leadership at all."
In the first place, inquisitors were supposed to have a chain of command and a division into various different positions, but Orochi guessed that they were all integrated to function as military.
It was a bad move, he asserted.
The only ones who operated as a proper armed forces in the Inquisition were the Spriggans. Their main duty was to act as special forces that were a countermeasure against crime that used magic. Organising them under the EXE as the top was absolute nonsense. Without unification the individuals would probably be able to work together sufficiently enough.
The Inquisition's numbers were overwhelmingly higher. Even if they received a surprise attack, they should be able to properly deal with it if they had a proper chain of command.
It was all fault of their top's decision that they were outmatched.
"Above all, it ain't no wonder they're so confused with this many civilians remainin'."
"Certainly, it's incomprehensible. Why was it that Inquisition had the civilians remain in the city? If they advised them to evacuate ahead of time, they would have received a lot smaller damage."
As Mother spoke matter-of-factly, Orochi clicked his tongue.
"No, his underlying motive's so obvious it makes me sick."
"……?"
"It's not that Sougetsu didn't evacuate the civilians. He left them on purpose."
Orochi squinted and said what was the real intention.
"——The humans in the city are *food for Hyakki Yakou* you see."
"Food?"
"Hyakki Yakou swallows everything and grows. However, its growth when eating inorganic materials ain't that high."
He put his both hands into the pockets of his kimono and continued indifferently.
"It eats organisms... in particular, it grows the most when incorporating humans. Just like in old tales about demons, they were originally fantastical organisms that were eating humans. Even though they were sealed in the bodies of Kusanagi's ancestors, their nature didn't change."
Listening to the story, Mother furrowed her eyebrows.
"...so that man is trying to do the same thing as 150 years ago."
"……"

"Just like with you and Kusanagi Mikoto... he wants to use those siblings to complete a God Hunter."
150 years ago. Hearing those words, Orochi's chest started to throb.
He could remember the first Witch Hunt War as if it was yesterday.
Even now it was clearly burned out in his mind.
His despair when he realized he killed his older sister, Kusanagi Mikoto, and created the world where everything died out, the rage when he learned he was dancing to Ootori Sougetsu's tune, he could remember it all.
That's why he could say this.
"He... Takeru ain't going to turn out like I did."
While still squinting, Orochi muttered with a smile on his lips.
Kusanagi Orochi and Kusanagi Mikoto.
Kusanagi Takeru and Kusanagi Kiseki.
The tragedies of the two were similar, yet different.
The reason for that, is because Takeru already accomplished what Orochi was unable to.
Takeru was different from him.
He won't shoulder the same feelings as Orochi.
But that's why——tonight, Takeru will most likely stand in Orochi's way.
Orochi made a small smile and switched his thinking.
"Well, if that's what enemy intends to do, there's just one thing we can do."
"?"
"Before the food is eaten, I'll eat it."
Mother could see Orochi's smile as it was stained by evil.
"...in other words, you're going to prioritize disposing the civilians in this city?"
"If Hyakki Yakou eats all the humans there and grows, it'll be troublesome. But, saying 'disposal' ain't a good way to put it... I literally intend to eat them, y'know?"
Hearing these ruthless words, Mother frowned slightly.
"What is it? You gonna preach me about good 'n evil now of all times?"
"...no."
"Whether humans die or not, as long as we achieve our goal *everything will be restored.* Right?"
Mother closed her eyes.
"Don't you have pangs of conscience?"
She said that a little bit sadly, in a lonely manner.
Orochi answered.
While laughing as if spitting out, he affirmed.
Coldly, calmly, just like a demon.
"Nope, nothin' like that. I was like this from the start. Whether now, in the past, ever since I was born I was genuinely selfish."
"....."
"As long as my goal is fulfilled I couldn't care less about the world. You too, knew about this and contracted with me, right?"

"....."
"Make your decision. We're rewriting the world ain't we."
Hearing Orochi's words, Mother opened her eyes.
She got down on both her knees and set her hands to a prayer.
As if she intended to repent for her sins.
"——I intended to do so from the beginning. This world is flawed. As long as we can correct it... I'll shoulder any sin."
Mother faced downwards, her lips trembled.

At the same time, a huge white magic circle appeared on the floor of the roof.
"Time had cometh. The deceased stained carrion, bestowed with blood clot of female goat. With the song of victory sung three times, thou shalt not stop pace of thy march. There is no glory ahead of here, there is no fall. But if thou wish f'r triumphant return, respond——

——the battle maidens art calling."

It was a chant.
Even among high-ranked even among high level summoning magic. A forbidden magic that couldn't be used unless countless sacrifices were made, the Hero Summoning.
Magic circle had intertwined with lightning and giant humanoids, like dead, have crawled from the ground.
Their number, was hundred.
Their figures were shaped like those of mechanical dolls, but they were a same type of existence as the Einherjar Haunted had summoned in the past, the King Arthur.
The soul and magical power that dwelled in them didn't have any ego, but they were that of genuine heroes. The Hero Summoning called out the souls of the dead and affixed them to the Magical Dragoons. Although it was just summoning souls, it was magic class a human couldn't use. Haunted only was able to use it thanks to the instant charm Mother Goose had prepared.
She alone, was the only existence that was capable of using Hero Summoning without a need of sacrifices.
She was the Sacred Treasure "Gungnir" holding the ancient property "God's Authority".
"No matter how many times I see 'em, those Einherjars you call make me sick. Those veteran warriors too, would be hate being turned into zombie-like puppets like that."
"It can't be helped. Alone I am incapable of performing a complete hero summoning. In any case, there's nothing to criticize considering them as combat forces."
"Hmph, I see... so you did make your decision."
"Ever since the moment I have contracted with you, I have made my decision."
Orochi knew these words weren't a lie.
He knew her for a hundred and fifty years. Even before they made a contract, he had seen the same scene.

But the two wouldn't overlap.
Although they understood each other, they didn't walk on the same path.
They only proceeded in the same direction, but the paths they walked on were different.
The two considered the contract only as a stepping stone for fulfilling their goal.
Orochi and Mother were both convinced that this was the ideal relationship between a Magical Heritage and its contractor.
It was far from Mistilteinn's.... Lapis' and Takeru's relationship.
"....."
Orochi told Takeru to deepen his relationship with Mistilteinn.
That was only because he wanted Takeru to walk a different path from him.
Why did he feel like that? Even if Takeru and Mistilteinn are connected by a deep bond, there was nothing in it for Orochi.
Orochi clearly understood the reason why was he led to think so.
Thinking about himself from the past and Takeru, Orochi pulled out the sword at his waist.
And,
"Now... well, let's go clean up."
The sorrowful demon who shouldered his past had began the slaughter.

Chapter 2 - Blood of Kusanagi

The story of Takeru's father visiting Orochi was from ten years ago.
They weren't acquainted. Moving away from the Valhalla after war, Orochi who settled himself for life of retirement in the mountains of old Japan, didn't expect that he, who was excommunicated from both Double-Edged style and True-Light style, would be visited by one of the Kusanagi.
Orochi knew that after the war, his younger brother had become the heir of Kusanagi and left very few descendants, but from the conversation he had with Takeru's father, he learned that they were destitute.
Except for his son, there was no one with blood of Kusanagi in them...
Takeru's father sat in seiza in front of Orochi who was cutting firewood and spoke of the Kusanagi recent status.
I don't care, that was Orochi's conclusion.
Even if the demons are released with Kusanagi's bloodline lost, even if the world overflows with the demons, it had nothing to do with him. If it was about the curse, then Takeru's father should blame their ancestors and onmyouji who tried to seal the demons in humans, Orochi snorted.
"Did ya come here for money? As you can see, I ain't got any. Or maybe in order not to have the demons released you want me to get a woman and make kids? You must be jokin'."
Appalled, Orochi cut the firewood with abandon using an axe.
"I ain't have any intention of coming back now, I couldn't care less about what happens to Kusanagi or the world."
Orochi passed on being bound by Kusanagi house's traditions, getting involved in the war, or being used by someone ever again.
He couldn't forget what he felt when over a hundred years ago he killed Mikoto, nor the peaceful expression she had.
Mikoto was smiling. Although her soul was already devoured by the effect of the God Hunter form, she shouldn't have a sense of self any longer and yet... that moment Orochi pierced through her heart, she was smiling.
Orochi promised Mikoto.
If you can no longer suppress yourself, at that time I'll kill you.
When still-young Orochi said so, Mikoto who was still a young child laughed happily.
——Thank you for fulfilling the promise.
On the verge of death, her lips certainly whispered so. Making the same smile as when they have promised each other...
Orochi saw Mikoto's smile in his dreams every night, then woke up looking at his palm, dyed with blood. The pain, suffering, and sorrow have remained as actual feeling rather than a dream.
Even though he wasn't interested in any human beings other than himself and didn't even remember the faces of others, he thought that the only thing he wants to remember was her smile.

That smile, was now hurting Orochi. The smile he loved so much, precisely because he loved it, had tormented him.
Orochi had no choice but to kill Mikoto.
But that was the correct choice. Even now he didn't regret it. As a result, he lost everything and received wounds that wouldn't ever heal.
Back then, certainly, Orochi died together with Mikoto.
"Go back. I have nothing to do with Kusanagis."
When Orochi said that. Takeru's father prostrated, pressing his head against the ground.
Don't be ridiculous. When Orochi was about to say that, Takeru's father had said the real reason for his coming to meet him.
——When I can no longer suppress my daughter, I want you to kill her.
——And please, after that I want to entrust my son to you.
Orochi stood up as he heaved a sigh and turned his cloudy pupils towards Takeru's father.
"...go back. If you don't disappear from here right now, I'll cut you down."
And said so, warning him quietly.
He knew the reason why was Takeru's father trembling violently. Not only were he and Orochi on completely different levels when it came to swordsmanship, they were completely different beings. Having vampire cells embedded into him, and being an instructor of Double-Edged style Orochi was already beyond any human.
A normal human who witnessed Orochi's anger would be petrified and lost their mind with fear.
However, Takeru's father still didn't raise his head.
He didn't return despite that.
——I beg of you... it's my lifetime request... Kiseki... that pitiful child... I beg you...!
Orochi could hear the tears dripping down.
If he was a human of Kusanagi, it was his duty as the father to kill the girls that were born. Although it seemed cruel, the result of being killed at birth was better. The girl would continue to live suffering because of the mismatch between her soul and body, the uncontrollable body of a demon would devour others, the girl's spirit would be exhausted, her ego lost, the demons released would swallow the world. Compared to tasting living hell and being driven to destroy the world, having the girl's life taken by the father's hands was salvation.
Takeru's father must have cursed his own weakness for not being able to kill his beloved daughter. He must have grieved himself for not being able to even shoulder the responsibility.
His tears said the entirety of the story.
...what you should tried is not yourself, but the fate of Kusanagi.
Orochi was sick of it. He couldn't sympathize nor mock him. Takeru's father was born into family cursed to be burdened with such fate.

As a member of Kusanagi, what he should do should have ended when he killed Mikoto.
He had no intention of shouldering anything else.
In the end, Orochi refused the request.
Takeru's father continued to prostrate in front of the gate, but a week later in the morning, he had returned back home dejected.

——It was a few years later that Hyakki Yakou went out of control.

Orochi went down the mountain and entered a human habitat for the first time in fifty years.
Something too clear to be foreboding or uneasiness had made him. Maybe it was the demon inside of him reacting, but Mikoto appearing in his dream was dripping with blood and pointed in a certain direction.
That direction was undeniably where the Kusanagi house was.
Although he continued to repeat himself it had nothing to do with him, his body had naturally headed for the Kusanagi house.
By the time Orochi reached it, Kusanagi house and the mountain village were enveloped by flames.
"....."
Orochi went past the burning house and headed towards the cliff directly behind it. Every time he entered the grass wet with dew in this thicket, Mikoto's tragedy had passed through his head.
The bushes opened up, the cliff appeared.
And there, a boy on his knees was watching over the burning village.
This kid must be Kusanagi Takeru. Since the Inquisition's helicopter was leaving, without a doubt he must have seen the capture of his little sister.
Orochi walked up near the boy.
And, standing next to him, he looked at the burning village.
The village was in terrible state. The Inquisition had suffered a lot of sacrifices in order to exhaust Hyakki Yakou by killing it, and these flames were a result of using various methods to do so.
"You're Takeru, right?"
Even as Orochi called out to him, Takeru faced downwards and didn't reply.
Seeing him face down and tremble, Orochi furrowed his eyebrows.
It was obvious what happened.
This boy didn't choose anything.
No, he couldn't choose.
He was unable to kill his little sister, unable to to try killing her and unable to protect her.

Orochi could tell at a glance. That's what the boy's back said.
Therefore, pity nor sympathy wouldn't help this boy in any way.
He grasped Takeru's hair and raised him up, forcing him to burn the hell in front of them into his eyes.
"——Remember this, Takeru. Burn the result of your decision not to choose anything. Don't you run away."
Even though he was unable to see anything, the boy's figure was clear to him through the reverberation of the sound.
His tears dried out, his eyes lost their light. Not even the flames rising from the village were reflected in his sight.
Orochi let go of the boy and pulled out the sword from his waist to swing it down in front of Takeru.
A bundle of the boy's bangs had fallen to the ground.
"There's no way to get rid of Hyakki Yakou curse. If Kusanagi bloodline dies out here, the worst disaster's gonna befall the world. But, I couldn't care less about it. That's why I'll give ya the right to choose."
"....."
"Whether it ends here, or continues. Don't run and make yer choice, brat."
The blade turned around in front of the boy.
The red flames were reflected by the blade and have shone on the boy who continued to look downwards.
While still being an empty husk, the boy grasped the blade with both hands.
Blood trickled down the blade, then stained the ground.
".....I want... to live."
That answer, was contrary to Orochi's expectations.
Orochi didn't think the boy would choose to live. Just what meaning was there to live in despair?
He got a little curious.
With his eyes still closed, Orochi crouched on the ground in front of the boy.
"Then I'll let you live. But, I'm not going to teach you anything. Don't forget that."
Orochi grasped the boy's collar with one hand and just like that, put him on his shoulder to carry.

"——Why do ya want to learn Double-Edged style?"
Takeru had requested Orochi to teach him swordsmanship a month after Orochi started to take care of him.
While gulping down sake from a cup, hiccuping, Orochi asked Takeru.
Although Takeru had continued to prostrate for seven days for naught, once Orochi was slightly intoxicated he asked out of curiosity.
Takeru who continued to bow, raised his head.

"Because I want to become strong."
"Why do you want to be strong? Do ya know what kind of swordsmanship is Double-Edged style?"
"It's swordsmanship for cutting down monsters."
"Wrong. It's a sword for killing demons. And by demons, I mean——Kusanagis."
As Orochi poured liquor from a bottle, he looked at Takeru.
Staring straight at Orochi, Takeru clenched his lips.
The meaning of Orochi's words was probably relayed to him. In other words, "Double-Edged style is swordsmanship for the sake of killing your little sister".
Are you going to learn Double-Edged style to kill your little sister? Is what he was asking.
"...I..."
Takeru clenched his fists on top of his knees and squinted.
"I... I want to learn Double-Edged style in order to protect Kiseki!"
Orochi made astonished expression for an instant, then started laughing loudly.
"WAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! Protect?! Double-Edged style protecting something?! Don't be stupid, Takeru."
"Why?! Kusanagi Double-Edged style used to be the strongest swordsmanship right?! If I can kill monsters then I protecting my little sister isn't...!"
"The strongest swordsmanship was the True-Light style used for fighting humans. Double-Edged style was never used in public."
"But... you're strong, right?! Double-Edged style is strong, right?!"
Seeing Takeru beg desperately, Orochi smiled bitterly.
"You said you're going to protect your little sister, just what will you protect her from?"
"...that's..."
"What's hurtin' your little sister is her body itself. Using Double-Edged style to protect your little sister, would mean directing your blade towards her. It's a contradiction."
It's a masterpiece, he said and laughed, gulping down alcohol.
Double-Edged style wasn't sword for protecting nor for killing. It was inhuman sword for cutting down the inhuman. It wasn't something that can protect humans.
"Or maybe you'll try to protect your little sister from Inquisition? I'll tell you this, there's no way you can compete with Inquisition just by mastering Double-Edged style. It's true that swordsmanship is outdated. It was a splendid thing as a martial art, but it's too weak when it comes to fighting with lives on the line."
"....."

□"To Inquisition who are armed with guns, sword is no better than scrap metal. Tryin' to take your sister back or protecting her is but a pipe dream. Give up."□
When Orochi snorted with his jaw on the armrest, Takeru expression changed.
As Takeru oozed with anger, wrinkled appeared all over his face.
Orochi continued to ridicule him.
□"You angry? Don't get angry over anything but sword, don't show your emotions... just like family rules say. You tryin' to be an adult and shoulderin' Kusanagi's name?"□
□"....."□
□"If ya consider Kusanagis temperament, from the world's point of view they'd all have bankrupt personality or were psychopathic criminals from the moment of birth dammit. Try havin' more awareness of that, screw learning swordsmanship, just live secretly and die secretly somewhere in the damn mountains. That'd be best for the world and for you."□
Fuelling the fire, Orochi yawned.
□"What's with you...?! Scrap metal you said?!"□
Takeru clenched his fist strongly enough to make his hand bleed, took the sword that was lying on the floor and stood up.
□"Don't... look down on swordsmanship...!!"□
He pulled the sword from its sheath and pointed it at Orochi.
Completely unfazed, Orochi enjoyed the alcohol and grinned.
□"That's more like it. Fine, if ye'll make me drop a sweat, I'll teach ya Double-Edged style."□
□"Bring it on... damn old man."□
□"But if ya don't come at me with intent to kill, you'll die. Prepare yourself. There's no moderation to Double-Edged style."□
Seeing Takeru intend to do so even without being told that, Orochi laughed merrily.

□□□

Ten minutes later.
Takeru lied down on the ground barely able to breathe.
With his body lying in the moist plants, he looked up at the starry sky.
As he chased the fireflies with his gaze, Orochi's figure appeared, looking down on him.

"You're so weak, Takeru."
He couldn't say anything back. Taught True-Light style from his father, Takeru had confidence since young. He wouldn't lose to any other swordsmanship school, even against adults. As the eldest son of the family of strongest swordsmen, Kusanagi, he put enough effort to puke blood.
...Takeru didn't think he could win. Just by looking, he knew Orochi was powerful. Were Takeru an ant, Orochi would be a dragon. That's how much their abilities differed.
But he thought he would be able to fight back, just a little.
The truth was that he couldn't even see his opponent's blade.
"Both arms and both legs broken. Ribs almost pulverized. Your spine's hurt. Left alone, you'll die. That's how serious your injuries are."
"....."
"This is Double-Edged style. Those numerous wounds is what it means to learn Double-Edged style. There's a high probability you'll die before you master it. What you get in exchange is not worth it."
"....."
"This is for your own good. If you want to live, give it up."
Orochi sheathed his sword and tried to take care of Takeru's wounds.
But seeing Takeru's hand try to hold the broken sword, Orochi stopped his stretched-out hand.
Takeru shouldn't have been able to move. Beaten by Orochi his both arms and both legs were broken, his hands lost their strength, he shouldn't have been able to stand up.
But seemingly not knowing he's unable to hold the sword any more, Takeru extended his neck and gripped the broken sword with his teeth.
Crawling like a caterpillar he arrived at Orochi's feet and tried to swing the sword by moving his neck.
Orochi no longer smiled.
"...Uuu...uuu...uuuh...nhh."
He could see tears well up in Takeru's eyes.
Still biting on the sword, Takeru spat out words with difficulty
"I...ca...n...only...do...this."
"....."
"I broke, my promise...with her...so...this time...I need to carry it through."
"....."
"I'm her...Onii-chan so...I promised...I'll definitely...save her..."
"....."
Letting out the sword from his mouth, Takeru pressed his crumpled face on the ground and shed tears.
"I... I can't bear bear living like this, doing nothing... nhh, if I can't do anything for her... there's no reason for me to live...!!"
"....."
"Becoming strong is...the only thing I can do...!!"

While looking down at Takeru who clung to him, Orochi quietly closed his eyes.
Becoming strong is the only thing I can do.
Orochi was the same. That was all he could do. Seeking strength alone he left Mikoto and rushed out to the war, seeking strength he even embedded vampire cells in his body.
It wasn't for a clear goal. He just convinced himself he wants to become strong. He thought that any reason other than pure desire to become strong is unnecessary, a reason wouldn't make him any stronger.
But now he knew. Back then the underlying reason in the back of his head which made him desire strength,
——Was always Mikoto's smile.
Orochi had first noticed that he was trying to become stronger in order to protect that smile when he lost it.
Looking down on Takeru with his cloudy white eyes, Orochi resolved himself.
This kid will become strong. His aptitude for swordsmanship, strong body and abnormal tenacity were all satisfactory.
As well as the endless desire to become strong.
"...I'm not the type to take disciples, but..."
Orochi scratched his head and heaved a sigh.
He took the sword off from his waist and along with the sheath, held it out. Then glared at Takeru.
"Very well. If yer' going that far——I'll have ya stop bein' human, brat...!"
That's what led to Kusanagi Takeru being taught Double-Edged style by Orochi.
There's no need to even speak of how aberrant the hell was that training.

□□□

Takeru had left Orochi shortly after he learned Soumatou, the forbidden skill of the Double-Edged style.
Once he had mastered Soumatou, he had become Double-Edged style's initiate, and with that as the starting point he brought up something with Orochi.
"I'm going to become an Inquisitor."
Orochi who was taking a nap on a hammock hanging between trees using a book to get some shade on his face, had glared at Takeru.

Takeru loudly swallowed saliva. When Orochi opened his eyes, he was usually boiling with anger.
"And what's yer motive for that?"
"I've been thinking. About what should I do to save my little sister."
"If you're going to try to slip into enemy base and bring her back, you'll just die."
Facing down, Takeru clenched his fist.
"I'm not that stupid. At the very least, I know that's impossible."
"Then why on earth yer wantin' to become a damn Inquisitor?"
To Orochi, Inquisition was enemy. They tortured Mikoto endlessly and used her as a tool for war, finally driving her to death.
He didn't really resent Inquisition, but as Takeru's master he couldn't let him go with just "oh is that so".
Takeru raised his head and stared straight at Orochi.
"...I'm going to change the world in order to let my little sister live normally."
.....
After a strange silence, Orochi's expression broke as if to say "haa?".
"...all you can do is swordsmanship, right?"
"Yeah."
"You have no other talent, or rather, you're not just incompetent but also have a bankrupt personality, right?"
"Yeah."
"And yet you'll change the world with swordsmanship?"
"Aren't you an idiot?"
Orochi seriously made a fool out of him.
"Why?!"
"You ain't gonna change the world with a mere sword."
"Don't say 'mere sword'. I'll use this power to become the Inquisition's top. Then I'll make it so my little sister can live a normal life."
"Aren't you an idiot?"
"Why?!"
The conversation was going in circles. As expected, Orochi was shocked, but Takeru didn't pull out.
"Even if I'm an idiot... if I become an Inquisitor... I can be beside Kiseki."
His helpless feelings bled out, he made a chagrined expression.
For him, it was the best thing he could think of. Since Kiseki was captured by Inquisition, he could only involve himself with them. He had no idea what was happening to Kiseki, but as a civilian he won't be allowed to visit her.
It was no lie to say right from the start that it was a mere pipe dream, but to this stupidly-honest boy, the choice of becoming an Inquisitor to be together with Kiseki wasn't completely wrong.
"....."

This kid will struggle as much as he can. Did Orochi, who had abandoned front-line when his role had ended and continued to waste time, have any right to stop him?
Despite the hopeless circumstances, wasn't this kid's actions much better as he tried to move on even if just a little, as compared to Orochi who continued to hide in the mountains in despair?
While soaking in the sunshine filtered through the tree leaves, Orochi heaved a sigh.
"I get where yer' coming from... there's nothing left for me to teach ya."
"Th-then!"
"Go wherever you like. In exchange, don't come back ever again."
shoo shoo, Orochi waved his hand, then covering his head with the book he started snoring again.
Takeru stood in place for a moment, but eventually stood straight and bowed.
"...thank you for taking care of me until now, Master."
I told you I'm not the type for this kinda thing, Orochi thought.
As he listened to the footsteps of Takeru as he left, strangely it's not a bad feeling, Orochi thought.
He moved away the book and looked at the sun peeking out from between the leaves.
As Takeru's master, Orochi should have stopped him. If Takeru goes to AntiMagic Academy, he'll definitely catch Ootori Sougetsu's attention. With a girl of Kusanagi who has the body of Hyakki Yakou and with a boy of Kusanagi who has the soul of a demon... there's no way that man won't make his move.
Orochi was easily able to imagine what kind of fate awaited Takeru.
However, men from Kusanagi family wouldn't back down no matter what.
Takeru was no exception, Orochi understood well over the last two years of training just how stubborn he was.
He would dash forward no matter what was said to him.
"....."
Reminded of his old self, Orochi raised his hand towards the sun.
Even though he lost his sight, the intensity of the sunlight was relayed to him through the intensity of the heat. Just like this glaring sun, in the past he also continued rush while scorching everything around him.
But now he only continued to waste time.

——Isn't it about time?

As if to grasp the sun, Orochi clenched his fist.
□"...it begins once again..."□
He could feel something frozen-up in the back of his chest start burn up once again.
It wasn't too bad to run once again, just like his past self.
Orochi thought so while distorting his lips joyfully.
He thought of what to do in order to dispel the chagrin.
Revenge, retribution, they weren't bad. Making the Inquisition his enemies in order to kill Ootori Sougetsu wasn't a bad idea either. Whether he succeeds or dies, he'll definitely feel refreshed. For motivation, revenge was enough. Justification can go eat shit.
If he's to continue living in vain, he might as well go out with a bang.
Orochi imagined that with a grin.
However——Orochi knew an even more wicked method which would let him regain everything.
□"...it has been a while, Kusanagi Orochi-san."□
When he raised his head, he felt a nostalgic scent.
It was a scent reminiscent of white flowers like jasmine.
Even after a hundred and fifty years, there was no way he could forget this scent that was mixed in together with the smell of blood.
He got down from the hammock and faced her.
Confronting Mother Goose.
□"As usual, you sure appear with amazin' timing."□
□"Yes, I felt I was called by you."□
Told so with the usual lack of expressions, Orochi smiled bitterly. Right after the war she consulted with him on the topic of contract, but back then he refused.
But, if it was now.
□"150 years ago we spoke about contractin' with me. Is that still valid?"□
With a wicked smile, Orochi turned his pupils which regained their sparkle towards Mother.

□□□

"....."
Takeru woke up along with a headache.

The memories about Orochi had appeared in his dreams, but as he immersed himself in the lingering dream, the moment he woke up the surroundings have slowed down.
Using an image of closing a lid, he somehow suppressed his brain.
Even though he was sleeping, he didn't seem to have rest at all as his brain screamed even louder than before.
When he looked at the clock, he saw than an hour has elapsed.
"...so you woke up. We're in middle of treatment, you seemed to have quite a nightmare."
Next to the bed, Sage leaned with his back against the wall and a familiar woman from the Gods' Embers had bowed and moved away from Takeru.
This was a room in the Border's Grey Hotel.
After escaping from the Critical Point, Takeru and others along with Sage and his members have hidden for the time being. Currently their battered-up bodies were being treated by the members of Gods' Embers.
"And the others?"
"Everyone's taking a break in a different room. They all had minor injuries."
"I see... that's great."
Although he smiled with relief, the tiredness remained on his face.
Sage looked towards Takeru as if investigating him.
"It's not. Your injuries are not just serious. If not for the Magical Heritage's support you would definitely be dead. It's strange that you're still alive."
"...sturdiness is my only merit."
"What I'm talking about is not just the damage to your body, but the damage to your brain."
Then Sage squinted sharply.
"...your brain is in abnormal state. Normally humans utilize 10% of their brain, but you're using more than 40%... even with strengthening magic it's impossible to raise your brain operation rate so much, what kind of skill are you using?"
"Swordsmanship... but even if I say that, it's not convincing huh. Well, it's fine as long as I don't use it continuously. Right now... I've abused it a little."
"At this rate you're going to die. You can't fool my eyes."
Being told that with a strong manner of speaking, Takeru got a little flabbergasted.
"You're worried about me? That's surprisingly kind."
"Wrong. I am aware that you're an important factor to ending this war. I'd be troubled if you died now."
"....."
"We have succeeded with our missions, but if the world continues as is everything will go to waste. Our fight isn't over yet."
Sage moved away from the wall and with his arms folded, looked at Takeru's bed.

"We should have made a promise that we'll help each other with all our strength as long as our goals overlap, even if we are to become enemies. I won't let you say you forgot that oath."
There was no kindness nor emotions in Sage's eyes. He relayed that he had helped them only because it was necessary.
Takeru squinted a little bit, then dropped his line of sight towards his palm.
He should have controlled the Soumatou, but he saw his palm double.
Just like Sage said, if it continues this state will be life-threatening.
But...
"I'm not dyin'... as if I would."
In order to live, this power was necessary.
"I want to live... I won't die no matter what."
He can't let his life be extinguish so easily after he broke his promise with Kiseki.
"Even if it's being stubborn, I'll do whatever possible, no matter what."
While recalling his declaration of war to Kiseki, he raised his face and focused himself.
"I will survive, and I'll save anything and everything."
What dwelled inside him, was without a doubt a soul of a demon.
Men of Kusanagi household were born with rough temper and stubbornness. It was said the reason for that was the fact they were born with demon souls rather than those of human's. It was a demon's nature to single-mindedly crave for just one thing, it was appropriate to call it madness.
Takeru didn't think of denying his own soul.
Right now he wanted to be proud of it, rely on it.
The demon soul that will never break.
"...I've heard of it before, but you really are a horribly stubborn guy."
"I'm told that often."
As Takeru replied lightly, Sage put on a faint smile.
There's nothing else I have to say, it implied.
"We scheduled a discussion in an hour. Rest your body until then."
In order to leave, Sage put his hand on the doorknob.
"...most likely even fiercer battles than before are waiting for us. Prepare yourself."
Leaving just that, Sage left the room.
Left behind, Takeru recalled the sight of the city from when they escaped the Critical Point.
The war had finally began. His past, everyday life was gone. The world war heading towards certain ruin.
He has to stop it. No matter the method used.
Takeru closed his eyes in order to prepare for battle.
Right now, he needs to preserve his strength as much as possible. Like Sage said, Takeru's brain wasn't in a state that would allow him to act optimistic.

He closed his eyes in order to reduce the burden on his eyes as much as possible.
But, he was no longer able to sleep.
If he sleeps, his control over Soumatou will be released.
It was impossible to stop the brain from going berserk as he sleeps.
Although he didn't tell Sage, but after just during one hour of sleep Takeru felt as if he continued to sleep for years. Because of that his tiredness didn't go away in the least. Rather than his body, it was his brain that was tired.
He will have to think of a method to deal with this problem after the fight is over.
Kurogane Hayato told him. The ones you are trying to oppose are existences mighty beyond your imagination.
His current state will probably shorten his lifespan... but in order to fight that monster-like strength, the power of Soumatou in out-of-control state was necessary.

□□□

While Takeru received treatment in another room, Ouka and the others were resting.
As Ouka sat down in the chair by the table, her gaze passed through Mineshiro Kazuma's documents she received from Kurogane Hayato.
"How is it? Can you read it?"
Usagi who carried a tray with tea had put the cups on the table as she peeked at the documents.
Ouka thanked Usagi and picked up a cup.
"It's difficult..."
Sitting down in front of frowning Ouka, Ikaruga held her chin in her hand and continued to play around with mint candy in her fingertips.
"Encryption, huh... well, I guess that much is a given."
"But, that Kurogane person was able to read it, right? Is it different from the one used by EXE's?"
Lying face-down on the bed, Mari asked as she flailed her legs.
Glaring at the document with a difficult expression, Ouka heaved a sigh and took a sip of the tea.
"It's close to the encryption used internally among EXE's but... it was arranged quite differently. It must be what the captain and vice-captain used. A normal member like me probably can't decipher it all."

"If you can't read it, it's definitely complex and difficult to understand. Like this, probably Oonogi-san won't be able to either. And we've got no clue what's President doing..."
Since they were the members of Heretic Alliance, the first one to read it should be their boss, but it was unknown what happened to Nagaru.
It seemed like all the members of the Heretic Alliance have evacuated, but naturally, their transfer's destination was away from the Inquisition's headquarters. Not only it would take time for them to rejoin each other, it would be very difficult now that the war had began.
Although it was fine to hide in the hotel, on site there were only the Sixth Guard Troop, Seventh Student Squad and the 35th Platoon. They had no choice but to communicate with the other members of the alliance to consult the course of action.
Suddenly, Ouka stood up from the chair.
"Could you leave the document with me for a little while? I'll try deciphering it."
"I do not mind... but please make sure not to lose it, all right?"
"I'm not a pro when it comes to encryption. Well, try what you can."
Ouka turned around on her heel and headed outside of the room.
Just one person, Mari had poured her suspicious gaze towards Ouka.

Pretending to be calm, Ouka walked down the hotel's corridor.
With a hand, she wiped the sweat on her forehead and at the same time she went past corner, she called Vlad.
"Vlad... do you know how's Takeru now?"
"Thou can just go to his room and confirm it."
"I'm asking because I can't do that."
"...after receiving treatment from a member of Gods' Embers, he seems to be resting obediently. Right now he's alone."
Ouka put a hand on her chin and pondered.
"From here on we'll talk using magical power communication. Put on a filter on it."
"Already appli'd one."
"...what do you think we should do?"
It was unusual for Ouka to seek Vlad's opinion outside combat. It meant the situation was that serious.
That was because she had already decrypted the content of the document.
While it was the truth that the arrangement of EXE's encryption, it was her forte and her hobby to solve one-time encryptions like that.
There was no way for her not to be surprised by the content.
Ootori Sougetsu is this world's God?
Her adoptive father was?

It was something hard to believe this suddenly. She certainly thought that he wasn't human, but at most she considered he was something like a sorcerer or a vampire.
But it must have been the truth. The world collision theory and the "Fragment of Mythological World" were real, and the evidence above all other is that Sougetsu moved behind the scenes as not to let them get this document.
After recognizing the contents as the truth, Ouka had no idea what should she do with this information.
"Thou belike shouldn't betoken thy comrades yet. Not only it will cause confusion but also decrease morale."
"...however, don't we have to tell them as soon as possible to make sure Ootori Sougetsu isn't killed? If that man dies, the world will perish."
"Not everyone can kill a god. A god is a magical organism... in other words, an existence that can't be kill'd by this world's substances. Thou don't hast to fret regarding to that."
Just like Vlad said, normally, magical organisms can't be killed with human hands.
The organisms holding magical power who live in this world are called fantastical organisms, the magical organisms summoned from another world using magical power in exchange had a fundamentally different nature.
Since they were outside of this world's principles, they were only temporarily summoned and impossible to kill. Once the magical power ran out they automatically returned to the world they have come from.
The existence called god was also a magical organism.
The problem was, that Ootori Sougetsu who was a god, had a body and lived in this world.
This world's God. Is what was written in the document.
"Considering he gave Mistilteinn to Kusanagi Takeru and tri'd to reshape him into a God Hunter, he's belike an existence that cannot commit suicide."
"....."
"Master, thou wot who shouldst thou betoken this to with highest priority, do thou?"
In response to Vlad's question, Ouka fell silent with a difficult expression. But soon enough she raised her head and resolved herself. There was no time to hesitate.
"——I thought it would be something like that."
Hearing a voice from behind, Ouka let out a short scream and turned around.
Mari stood there, staring intently.
"N-Nikaido... w-w-what are you talking about?"
Seeing Ouka's attitude that suggested she clearly hid something, Mari heaved a sigh.

"Don't go doing things that don't suit you. Also, your magical communication is leaking all over y'know?"
"N-no way, Vlad is properly encrypting i——"
"Who do you think I am?"
Mari put a hand on her hip and raised her chin as if to look down on Ouka.
It wasn't that Ouka forgot, and it couldn't be said that she was careless.
Despite all that happened, Mari was a quite renowned witch and was said to be a specialist when it came to attack magic.
Even as she was overpowered by her gaze, Ouka directed the brunt of her anger towards Vlad.
□"...I hast told thou many times that doing this is unprofessional."□
Vlad said with a tone of voice as if he was in a bad mood.
□"Don't give me that! This is a top level secret!"□
"I said, you're leaking it all over."
Having an index finger thrust at her nose, Ouka bent backwards.
As she tried to find an excuse after all the time that passed, Mari's expression softened.
She stopped staring and made an amazed expression.
"I don't really blame you. After hearing you earlier, it's not like I don't understand your not wanting to confuse everyone."
".....Nikaido."
"But, no shouldering it alone! You're absolutely telling everyone!"
Ouka intended to say she was going to do that anyway, but kept silent.
I would be acting like Takeru, she thought.
"Let's talk with Takeru first. I'll go with you."
Standing proud, Mari wouldn't back down no matter what.
Ouka relaxed her shoulders and reluctantly agreed on going with Mari.

□□□

Ouka and Mari came to Takeru's room and told him about the document.
Told that Ootori Sougetsu whom the Heretic Alliance should overthrow was the God of this world, and in front of the truth that this world will perish if he's killed, Takeru——
"Is that so."
" "....." "
".....a god, huh. I see."

Put his hand on his chin, convinced, took a sip of bottled water that was put on the bedside and closed the cap.
" "....." "
"....?"
Astonished, Ouka and Mari looked at Takeru's reaction and,
" "That's all?!" "
They leaned over, retorting.
Takeru sitting in the bed had bent backwards in surprise.
The two were unable to understand why was this man more surprised by a retort than the truth that "Ootori Sougetsu is a god".
"G-got nothing else to say?! He's a god, a GOD! Is it too crazy for you to comprehend or something?!"
"If we kill that man the world will perish! The Heretic Alliance's goal is to stop the war, but the operation of getting rid of the highest priority target won't end with just 'a few' casualties you know?!"
As the two drew closer to him, Takeru smiled wryly and scratched his cheek soundly.
Their expressions turned into those of disbelief more and more.
"W-well, I'm still surprised but... honestly, with things like Mythologic World, collision of worlds, Sacred Treasures, we've been involved with too many surreal and you get used it... I guess?"
" "As if!" "
"I-I'm sorry."
He ended up apologizing reflexively, Takeru was always being himself.
Meanwhile, Lapis emerged beside Ouka and Mari.
"As expected of my Host. That imperturbable dignity even in face of the world's truth. I am proud to be your sword."
**clap* *clap* *clap*,* while applauding Lapis said so expressionlessly.
"You, stop flirting at weird times!! Can it be that you knew about it?!
"I didn't know. I wasn't interested why did Ootori Sougetsu want the power for killing gods... I was fine as long as I could fuse with my Host. But, thinking well about it, it all makes sense if his goal is suicide."
"So what if it does make sense, what are we gonna do?! We can't kill him you know?!"
When Ouka asked Lapis that, Takeru who was in bed made a meek look.
"Our goal isn't killing Chairman. What we were talking about, was that we might have to kill him in order to save Kiseki and to stop the war."
"Y...you're right, but it doesn't change the fact that our options to resolve it have narrowed."
"I guess. But on the other hand, knowing his goal, we can focus on not killing him no matter what."
"....uh."
What he said was simple, but can they do anything about that man without killing him? They didn't know too well why was he this world's God in the first place.

In the document, it was written about the Fragment of Mythological World they have reached and was real, but there were no reasons or circumstances in which Sougetsu had become the God.
Just the facts were written briefly in the document.
Ootori Sougetsu is a God.
That was all.
"Even if he's a God, it's not like he can do anything he wants. Otherwise he wouldn't go so roundabout when it comes to destroying the world. Stopping the war without killing him and saving Kiseki should be possible."
"....."
"Well, as for the approach it's not something I can think of alone, we need to think of it all together. That's what Heretic Alliance is for after all."
Neither Ouka nor Mari knew Takeru could act this positively.
He only looked ahead. It was mysterious just how reassuring that was.
In particular Ouka had received the biggest shock upon learning the fact killing Sougetsu would make the world perish.
She clenched her fist and faced downwards in frustration.
"...Takeru, are you satisfied with that?"
"....."
"Can you allow that man to live endlessly without paying him back?"
Takeru faced down just for a moment in response to Ouka's words, but soon after he made a smile.

"——I'll pay him back by not killing him. Living endlessly is hell for that bastard isn't it. So, let's have him live forever."

Hearing that, Ouka recalled that killing Sougetsu wouldn't be paying him back.
Above all, Takeru's goal wasn't revenge. He was different from Ouka who had no one to save.
It wasn't that he was broad-minded or tolerant.
This man is just straightforward.
"Whatever Chairman is, what we have to do doesn't change."
Who cares about the truth of the world.
Who cares about the origins of the world.
Who cares about what is a god.
The truth that Mineshiro Kazuma desperately tried to obtain, the truth that Kurogane Hayato desperately tried to hide, the truth that Ootori Sougetsu was the foundation of the world.

This man——couldn't care less about it.

□□□

The three teams from the Heretic Alliance have gathered in the lobby in order to make advance arrangements on what they should do in the future.
First of all, the explanation of the content written in Mineshiro Kazuma's document was necessary.
Takeru was the one explaining.
The exclusion of Ootori Sougetsu from the targets for assassination. What should be done in order to stop the war was defeating the commanders of the invasion, Mother Goose and Kusanagi Orochi. He also explained that Kusanagi Kiseki, who is the Inquisition's ultimate weapon should be stopped.
That was all he explained.
Everyone stood astonished.
Takeru had recognized the fact that Ootori Sougetsu was a God as "There's a need to change the strategy".
Of course, 35th Platoon aside, it wasn't like the members of Pureblood Party or the Gods' Embers accepted it with "Oh, is that so".
At first it was "you must be joking, right?", then it continued with "What do we do...".
"If the opponent is a god, how do we deal with him...?"
"I don't really know myself, but isn't it fine to continue as we were?"
Takeru said that seriously to the speechless members of Pureblood Party.
"No way, is he even someone we can stand against...? If he's a god, he can blow someone like us away with a mere swing of a hand..."
"Hmm, if he could do that, wouldn't he do so right from the start? Or rather, I guess he has no need to do so. I mean, his goal is suicide."
" " " " "....." " " " "
All the Pureblood Party members stood astounded at once.
What's with this guy acting carefree... does he have a screw lose in his head?
And even more so than the Pureblood Party, the problem were Gods' Embers.
From the point of look of their religious beliefs, the words "Ootori Sougetsu is this world's God." were a blasphemy above all else. To them who believed

in a God who wasn't a magical organism, this high-level existence that couldn't be recognized as a human was enough to despair.
Quiet Sixth Miko's Guard Troops held their hands together to pray. Some were sorrowful, some looked stunned as they stared into the air, there were various reactions.
But the captain, Mikado Yuzuho was different. With her usual resolute attitude she struck the floor with the spear's handle.
"I see. So Ootori Sougetsu is a magical organism."
With these words, the girls of the Sixth Guard Troop raised their heads.
Despite receiving the truth that Ootori Sougetsu was a God, Yuzuho wasn't upset.
"And that magical organism holds the life of this world itself... is that all the information you received?"
Takeru nodded in response to Yuzuho's words.
"Yeah."
"Then it's natural to exclude him from the targets to eliminate. Let's concentrate the operation on stopping the Valhalla's leaders and Hyakki Yakou. With that, the war will mostly end."
"Exactly."
When Takeru responded with a smile, Yuzuho nodded satisfied.
Yuzuho spoke to surprised members of the personal guard.
"The almighty God we believe in is not a magical organism like Ootori Sougetsu. He encompasses many different worlds and resides in higher dimension outside the reach of human knowledge, we believe in the God that watches over our fate."
" " " "....." " " "
"If you are true believers, you shouldn't despair because of the existence of a magical organism that devours the life of this world."
Then she re-sat on the sofa once again and said to Takeru, "Allow me say this, though".
"Please stop calling Ootori Sougetsu a 'god'. It's unpleasant. That thing should be recognized as a mere magical organism. In the first place, a God is——"
"Ookaay, I get it!"
Since it seemed like she would go on for a while, Takeru interrupted it early.
Putting both his hands on the table, Takeru stood up.
"War has already began. We've no time, not enough forces. But we've already decided what to do."
It was questionable whether they should nod in approval in response to Takeru's words.
Rushing in without having anything resolved was foolish. It was just a suicide attack. Their defeat was clear.

But as Takeru said, there was no time. If the war continues, at this rate the world will definitely be destroyed. Whether they kill Sougetsu or not, the result will be the same.
First, stopping the war is top priority.
"Thinking about it now is a waste of time. Let's do what we can."
That's what Takeru learned from the battles until now, and from his comrades.
This alliance's team was a hybrid troop. They need to fight in their own fields of specialization.
Takeru understood that well.

There was still no contact from the Heretic Alliance's members who have evacuated from the headquarters. What Takeru and others knew, was that they were in a very distant place.
The intelligence gathering troops that were dispatched to the city before the war began couldn't be contacted either and the alliance members on the scene didn't know anything.
In other words, the only ones among the Heretic Alliance who could cooperate were the three teams in here.
They could only look from the distance at what was happening in the city, but it was clear that it had turned into hell.
Most likely, the ones who had the advantage were Valhalla with their surprise attack.
At this rate, if the Inquisition is cornered...
"...Kiseki..."
Inevitably, they will have Hyakki Yakou enter the battle.
If that happens, Takeru will witness the nightmare for the third time.
He didn't want to see that kind of thing ever again.
Takeru dressed himself, and tried to leave the room in order to head to the battlefield with his comrades.
The moment he opened the door, his vision shook.
When he staggered from dizziness strong enough to make him fall over, someone supported him from the side.
"...Mari."
"Be quiet. I should be able to ease it a little."
As she lent him a shoulder, Mari put her hand on Takeru's forehead.
Her hand on his head was tinged with heat and glowed faintly.
"Among the types of charm magic, there's one that acts as a sedative... it'll suppress your brain's activity a little."
"...you, noticed huh."
Takeru said that with a tired expression.

Even as he tried to stand, he couldn't find any strength in his legs. It seemed like he's going to put all his weight on Mari's small body.
Mari furrowed her eyebrows and while firmily supporting him, she continued using magic.
"For your information, everyone at least noticed that your state is strange long ago. I came because I'm the only one who can ease you, Takeru."
"...is...that so."
"Everyone knows already that you're a guy who won't listen despite the state you're in. That's why everyone does what they can. They're preparing for battle."
The hand on his forehead had slid down to his cheek.
Mari's pupils moved closer.
"See, I too... actually want to stop fighting and hide somewhere in the mountains together until the world perishes. Right now, even if just by a second, I want cherish the time with everyone... with you."
"...I think so too."
"But, you're going to fight, right? There's no stopping you, right?"
"...yeah."
He didn't apologize.
"In that case, we won't let you die... we'll protect you...! That's what we can do...!"
We won't stop you, she meant.
Everyone must have wanted to stop him. Usagi, Ikaruga, Mari, Ouka...
They didn't want Takeru to fight. The opponents were the most powerful leaders of Valhalla, Hyakki Yakou that devours the world and a God on top of it.
There was no perspective of winning.
Despite what he said, Takeru was aware of that.
Bravado, unfeeling, accustoming, neither of those applied to him.
However, there was no choice but to do it. Unless he does it, he won't get what he wants.
Who would stop the man who thinks like that. Who would reject such selfish wish.
What his comrades could do, was only lending him a hand.
Takeru too after all this time wouldn't tell them not to come. Right now, he fully relied on his comrades. He even relied on them too much.
That's why, even in this state, he thought of himself as a person happy from the bottom of his heart.
Since he sought even greater happiness than this, there was no wonder he was ridiculed as an idiot by Mari and other comrades.
"Let's go together... everyone, together..."
Mari embraced Takeru as he smiled powerlessly.
He didn't start acting reckless today.
Despite being aware that he only troubled his comrades, he felt guilty for not being able to back down.

The battle was beginning.
Most likely, it was a fierce battle like nothing he had experienced until now
——

Chapter 3 - Those Who Arrive in Front of God

Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward. That's what it used to be called.
The damage it suffered from the past war was enough to reshape the land and the reconstructed Shinjuku was different from the original.
This city that held the Inquisition's headquarters flourished and sparkled more than any land in old Japan.
But now there wasn't a single remnant of that.
The post-war devastation from 150 years ago had come once again.
The collapsed buildings and trees. Cars in flames. The smell of burned human bodies.
Not even a single person was alive in here.
The victims weren't just inquisitors and sorcerers.
Ordinary people... children and the elderly, even pregnant women were lying on the roads.
Nearly all the bodies were dried up as if mummified.
"...this, is... what..."
Usagi crouched and held her mouth.
It wasn't just Usagi, everyone was horrified.
Only half a day had passed since the war had began, this much damage was unusual.
Under the gloomy, cloudy sky, there was hell.
"Why were the civilians still here...?! Why weren't they evacuated...!"
Ouka spat out those words with anger.
"No vital reactions...? No way right...? There were hundreds of thousands people in here...!!"
She desperately used magic to search surroundings, but there wasn't a single sign of life within the range.
In the place the shelter was in, there was a crater that looked like one after bombing. The white powder in the air must have been the only remnant after humans.
They could only think that the enemy had prioritized attacking on the location with the most civilians.
"It's also strange that there's no signs of Inquisition or Valhalla either... it wouldn't turn out like this even if they used Hyakki Yakou. All the bodies are dried up..."
Even Ikaruga couldn't imagine what happened.
"It's something Valhalla would do. Not like they started doing this now. What do we do, Kusanagi. Rejoin the alliance and wait?"
Kyouya made a disgusted expression and asked.
It was a sound judgement to prioritize meeting the rest of alliance now that they didn't understand the situation. The enemies lurking in the surroundings weren't limited to just those who show signs of life.

"...we'll head to the academy. Valhalla's destination is Inquisition's headquarters... we need to stop them."
If they don't, Kiseki will enter combat.
Takeru was bothered by the fact Kiseki still hasn't appeared, but thought about going to meet her and allowing his sword to carry his feelings.
He couldn't afford Valhalla to get in the way of their sibling fight.
Judging by the damage dealt to this city, it'll be too late if they don't hurry.
Takeru and the others hurried on the road to school.
The more they advanced forward the more of the same scenery they have seen. There was no one alive as they passed, not a single voice.
The city that had so many people living in it was silent as if there was no one in there in the first place.
This city was dead, in just half a day its life was exhausted.
And——
".....no way..."
Ouka who arrived at the school gate fell on her knees.
The first thing that entered the sight upon coming here, the symbol of this place, the tower with sealed Magical Heritages.
It was collapsed starting from the root.
The Coliseum for large-scale exercises, the campus, the dormitories, faculty buildings, everything... and anything was destroyed.
There were corpses of the inquisitors and the students lied around the gate's defence line as well as miserable wrecakge of Dragoons. From the opposing side, corpses of the sorcerers and wreckage of Magical Dragoons could be seen.
It was clear that Inquisition resisted with all it had.
"...the academy was..."
Pale, Usagi looked at the collapsed school.
All the members of the 35th Platoon that passed through here had the same feelings. Even though they were unpleasant, there were memories of their comrades in here. They laughed together, fought against each other and grew together.
The familiar classrooms, the crowded dining room, the depressing shooting grounds, the Coliseum where the mock battle tournaments were carried out, the school yard that was packed during Witch Hunt Festival... and their platoon room.
All of it was destroyed and gone.
There was no way they wouldn't receive shock.
This place was where the 35th Test Platoon belonged to.
The place for them to return to.
"...what do we do... Takeru... hey, what do we doo...?!"
Trembling, Mari clung to Takeru.
"...Takeru?"
When she grasped his clothes, Takeru's posture broke.
Sage who was right beside him, supported Takeru's body.

"You okay?"
"...! At a time like this...!"
Takeru's vision shook, a pain as if he was hit in the head with a club had assaulted him.
If his concentration is interrupted even for a moment, the Soumatou will activate by itself.
Its running out of control came like a seizure. Trying to control it had come along with a tremendous amount of pain.
Losing all his strength, he fell down on his knees despite Sage supporting him.
"Don't force yourself. It's dangerous for you to fight in this state. 35th Platoon should hide. We and the Sixth Guard will carry out reconnaissance, starting with scouting for enemies in the academy."
"...but!"
"It's fine, leave it to us. This kind of work is our speciality. No clue about the Guard though."
When Sage said that, Yuzuho yelled furiously "whaattt?!"
"We too can do scouting just fine! How dare you compare our miracles with your pagan witchcraft——?!!"
It was when she was refuting with a rough voice.
Although Yuzuho tried to strike the ground with her spear, she swung it sideways instead.
——Momentarily, in the empty space right beside her, a giant body had suddenly emerged.
Her swung spear hit the giant that had emerged.
But the giant didn't even flinch from the blow.
"...this guy's...!"
Surprised Ouka materialized Vlad and pulled the trigger to the limit.
Blood-coloured stakes burst into the giant's head and chest.
The damage dealt——none. They were unable to penetrate through the translucent, shining armour.
"An 「Einherjar」!"
Sage immediately expanded his magical circle and made a chain appear from the ground.
The chain attached itself to the emerging Einherjar's body, temporarily stopping its movement.
"All members, spread out! Move away!"
In response to Sage's voice, everyone rushed in various directions.
As Takeru couldn't move, after turning into Witch Hunter form Ouka lent him a shoulder and leaped all at once to make distance.
The chain that wound around the Einherjar had stopped its movement for a moment, but soon enough it was torn apart and the railgun-shaped sword was pierced onto the ground.
「"「Crystal Vanish」"」
Along with the magic name, the light blue magic circle shone.

"Sage!"
Takeru shouted over his shoulder.
Sage continued to maintain magic in order to buy time to escape.
Right after that, crystals have overflowed from the magic circle's centre.
Crystals protruding in acute angles like icicles of a glacier swallowed Sage, and the next moment——the light burst out.
Ouka who carried Takeru on her shoulder hid in the building's debris together with Ikaruga.
A shockwave swallowed up everything, shrouding the surroundings in smoke.
Inside the smoke that was the aftermath, Ouka put down Takeru on his back on the rubble.
"Hide in here, Takeru...!"
"I'll fight... too...!!"
"What if you exhaust yourself here! Your power is our trump card! Suginami, take care of Takeru!"
Ouka shook off Takeru's hand and rushing out, she disappeared in smoke.
Takeru tried to go after her, but Ikaruga grasped his shoulders stopping him.
Although he tried to shake her off, but as the shaking in his brain assaulted him again, he ended up falling to the ground.
"...damn it...!!"
His outstretched hand fell to the ground, he clenched his fist in frustration.

□□□

The smoke had began to clear up, with two guns in her hands Ouka aimed at the appearing opponent.
It was unknown what happened to Sage. The Einherjar was alive and well, with the constraints released he gracefully pulled out the railgun from the ground.
The crystal-like armour... most likely the enemy's armour was made of Blue Crystal. They will have a hard time trying to damage it.
At the same time Ouka raised her weapons, Mari and Usagi appeared from the sides.
"Please leave support to us."
"Blue Crystal... that's nasty. Well, he's no opponent for my magic."

"Don't let your guard down. I'll be the decoy. Saionji, support me. Nikaido, prepare a large-scale magic... let's bring him down with one blow."
" "Roger!" "
At the same time the two replied, Ouka began her attack.
She kicked off the ground and jumped forward at the same time as she fired a stake at enemy's shoulder, the first blow shot through the smoke.
**dinnnngggg*!*
Along with a high-pitched sound, the Einherjar's railblade and the stake collided.
The reason she challenged him in the close combat, was to not allow him to fire magic bullets. Because Einherjars had an unusual amount of magical power, even magic bullets fired by them were ridiculously powerful.
They couldn't match him in rapid fire. The best course of action was to focus on close combat before annihilating him with Mari's magic.
The enemy's armour was made of Blue Crystal. Cooperating with Usagi, Ouka wanted to make a crack in the armour. If they confirm the Einherjars identity they might find his weakness, but she aimed to act like Takeru, moving before she thinks.
Fortunately, her allies right now weren't just the platoon members.
"Guards' Spearsmanship ——Eternal Triple Flash!"
At the same time a voice was heard from above, Ouka leaped away from the Einherjar.
As they exchanged positions, Yuzuho hit the Einherjar's head with her spear. When she made her attack, to Ouka it seemed as if there were three Yuzuhos.
It was an illusion made using magic that made it seem like there were three of her.
The Einherjar staggered, Yuzuho landed on the ground.
Although it seemed as if Einherjar would fall on his back, on the verge of collapse he had aimed at Yuzuho who landed on the ground.
Yuzuho bent her knees and jumped, but it was too late for her to avoid. The enemy's magical bullet was slightly faster.
That's when, a green shadow had slid in from behind Yuzuho.
It was Kyouya.
Kyouya passed between Yuzuho's legs and slipped under the Einherjar.
"Buckshot!"
Nero's shotgun fire hit the Einherjar from zero distance.
The armour on the abdomen crumbled off, the semi-transparent pieces danced in the air like glass.
But the shattered armour was repaired momentarily, like a video playback, it had returned to its original state.
Despite the fact it looked like a Dragoon, inside there was an Einherjar. The railgun was also a Magical Heritage, it was appropriate for it to have a special performance.

However, it wasn't like the 35th Test Platoon was unfamiliar with combat against Einherjars as to let him repair.
Along with the sound of gun fire, five bullets slipped past Yuzuho and Ouka. The bullets pierced the armour made of Blue Crystal on the verge of repair, pulverizing it again.
Usagi stood holding her rifle, smoke rose up from the muzzle.
"——Nikaido, please take care of it."
When Usagi said that with a squint, a rainbow-coloured shadow had come flying from the sky.
That silhouette swinging its right arm, was the Witch of Aurora, Nikaido Mari.
Expanding five-layered magical circle, Mari swung her both arms with all her strength.
Magical power converged to the limit, her joined two hands shone.
And——
"Aurora Impact!!"
——Mari swung down her hands at Einherjar's head, releasing the magic.
" " " "——HEYY?!!" " " "
The accumulated magic exploded, wrapping the surroundings momentarily.
Everyone turned pale on spot. Everyone expanded barriers and protection as not to get engulfed in the shock wave and Ouka acted as Usagi's shield.
Mari who pulverized the Einherjar landed lightly on the ground and making a V sign with her fingers she directed it towards her comrades.
"How was it, howw? Did'ya see it? My magic is the strongest after all! I wouldn't mind if you praised me!"
As Mari puffed up her chest and burst into a smug expression, everyone on spot got pissed off.
Everyone was covered in pure white dust that was raised into the air.
"Think of your attack's range, retard!"
"Good grief, sorcerers are always like this! Really!"
"Just now it was enough to kill us all you imbecile!"
"Since you are a lady you should hold back a little!"
"...sorry everyone... but would you pull me out...? I've been buried even deeper just now."
Dissatisfied with the situation where she was blamed by everyone, Mari stomped the ground with "what's with you all". Sage who was completely buried in the rubble also seemed safe and was pulled out by other members of the Pureblood Party.
Seeing everyone was safe, Ouka sighed with relief.
"...that Einherjar, it can't be that..."
"Without a doubt it was transfer magic... but transfer magic isn't something that can be used so easily... the consumption of magical power is huge, and the formula for sending someone in without a gate on the other side isn't so simple."

After questioning Mari about the transfer magic, Ouka's expression turned steeper.
"Which means they've improved it?"
"...even so, it's still abnormal. If there's anyone who could use such a thing it would be——"
When Mari was about to say it, that moment.
A distortion in time and space appeared and like a puzzle, giant humanoid was gradually formed out of single pieces combining in an empty space.
A new Einherjar. And it wasn't over with just one, their numbers increased very fast.
After just a few seconds, Ouka and the others were surrounded by an army of Einherjars.
"...speak of the devil...!"
"These numbers... what do we do?!"
Everyone poised themselves back to back, horrified seeing the emerging Einherjars in the surroundings.
Twenty in total. Each of them being a one-man army, previously summoned King Arthur had partially destroyed AntiMagic Academy by himself.
Siegfried summoned in the Border too, was a formidable enemy for a company and the 35th Platoon before he was taken down.
And now there were twenty of monsters of that class.
Even though they were finally able to take one of them down with participation of six members.
"Keh... coming with numbers, huh. Fine by me...!"
Kyouya changed Nero's form into tonfas and raised them up.
"Don't move carelessly... stop...!"
Sage pulled out a wand from his belt and poised it.
"Black magicians are really beyond help... putting spirits of the dead inside mechanical dolls... there should be a limit to bad taste."
Holding a spear, Yuzuho had her comrades stay behind and moved towards the front.
The Einherjars looked for any movements of the enemy with their emotionless, mechanical eyes.
If anyone moves, they will attack all at once. Feeling as if they were surrounded by a pack of beasts, all the members felt their nerves strained.
Gripping their weapons, poising as to be able to attack any time they only stared at Ouka and the others' moves.
Unexpectedly light entered through between clouds, blinding everyone.
Blinking, Usagi looked upwards in surprise.
And there was——
"As I thought, it was you all."
While wary of the Einherjars, everyone looked upwards.
She was there, in the middle of the light pouring down from between the clouds.

The white figure looking like that of a God's messenger was incredibly mismatched with the appearance of the city that turned into hell.
The woman floated in the air, her white robe flapping in the wind as she coldly looked down at the ground.
"...Mother Goose...!"
Obstructing the light with her hand, Mari angrily called the woman's name.
Mother Goose slowly looked through one member of Heretic Alliance to another, in the end looking at Mari.
"It has been a while, Nikaido Mari-san. It's great to see you in good health."
"Ghh, answer me! Is this massacre your doing?!"
Asked a frank question, Mother nodded in response.
"Yes. Exactly so. I was the one who summoned Einherjars and assaulted this city."
Mother responded indifferently, without any shame.
Mari swung her right arm, making an increasingly rugged expression.
"Why... weren't you supposed to be East Side's top?! Why are you doing something West Side would do! Didn't you say you didn't want to involve unrelated people in the war?!"
"I also have said, that I'm willing to make the minimal sacrifices."
These frosty words caused Mari's anger to culminate.
"Minimal you say...? Just how many hundreds of thousands do you think you killed...?!"
The shock Mari received was indescribable.
More than month ago she was a student of Magic Academy, of course she didn't trust Mother Goose completely. She didn't believe in Mother's pretty words, after all this woman tried to kill her in order not to have information leaked.
But the world of East Side Mari knew was a very comfortable place. All the people living in there were warm.
An utopia for the witches who live outside... the thought that the person who had created it stood behind this massacre had overwhelmed Mari.
As if seeing through Mari's heart, Mother closed her eyes as if to a prayer.
But soon enough she opened her eyes and looked at everyone with her pupils looking like glass beads.
"I won't excuse nor defend myself. This city's sacrifice——is minimal to me."
She overlapped her palms and in mid-air, prayed to the heavens.
"Back down. This is not your battlefield. If you are to become my enemies ——"
Her hair was ruffled, her eyes opened wide.
The ruby pupils have spread, dyeing her eyes bright red.

"——The majesty of 'God's Authority' will crush you all."

Then a pure white magic circle appeared, looking as if it covered the entire sky and light had poured down from several breaks in the clouds.
An army of Einherjars descended. Their number increased to over a hundred.
The Einherjars surrounding the alliance members also moved. All of them raised their railguns, they fired sparkling magic from the muzzles.
"——Protective magic! Everyone defend!"
At the same time as Ouka cried out, those who were able to use magic have created protective barriers with all magical power they had.
Magic bullets were simply a mass of magical power capable of simple destruction, but with the amount of magical power held by Einherjars, their destructive power was incomparable to normal magic.
Protecting from them was extremely difficult. But surrounded, the had no choice but to protect from them.
The railguns weren't intended for high rate of fire. If they withstand the enemy's barrage, there was a chance of being able to escape.
"They're coming!"
Sage fluttered the point of his wand, building up a wall of rust and covering everyone with it.
His protective barrier had a very high defence against physical and magical attacks, but got in the way of visibility.
A rust wall strong enough not to even let any sounds in had protected everyone.
"——Ghh...!! Seventh Squad! Everyone build a multi-layered barrier! Mine won't hold!"
As Sage ordered his subordinates, they built up a ward with a joint chant.
Cracks entered Sage's barrier, the sound from the outside flowed in. A wave of magic surged in from the outside. An imminent destruction coming from all sides. The gunfire of the Einherjars... no, the bombing continued.
The moment four people stretched out a barrier, Sage's protection shattered.
The Seventh Squad's quadruple barrier replaced it, but two layers were immediately broken through and the third layer had filled with cracks.
"Guards too, build an inviolable area and reject the magical power! Five overlapping 【Shrouds of Rejection】!"
Yuzuho pierced the ground with her spear, together with the members of the Sixth Guard behind her she solidified the defence. Forming a wire from magical power, she created a strong ward overlapping like a chain mail.
But that barrier too, a piece of wire after piece had collapsed.
Although Yuzuho received magical power from her spear, a Magical Heritage, the limit had come all too soon.
"...nhh, I leave... the rest to you...!"

When she reached her limit, Yuzuho clenched her teeth and said so, and her barrier burst.
At that moment——a rainbow-coloured magic circle rose up from the ground.
"Leeaave it to me!"
Scattering rainbow-coloured magical power, Mari smashed the magic circle on the ground.
"【Aurora Fortress】!"
At the same time it was punched, the magic circle was broken and magical power covered her comrades.
It was a huge fortress shaped with magical power. The fortress had perfectly blocked the numerous magic bullets fired by the Einherjars.
If Mari's most powerful attack magic was 【Aurora Gate】, then the 【Aurora Fortress】 was the one that exerted the most powerful defence. Because it required a huge operative procedure, it needed a long chant. Her comrades have earned the time for her to finish it.
This fortress——will not collapse with something on the level of magic bullets.
The Einherjars used not only magic bullets, but also fired different magic. Magic circles were drawn in the air and the magical power materialized things like meteors, rain of spears, dragon apparitions and such, assaulting Mari's fortress.
"These...damn...!"
Cracks appeared on the Aurora Fortress.
And——there were no chances to run.
While the barrage paused, the rest of Einherjars used magic and when the magic had stopped, the barrage of magic bullets began.
"Nikaido...! Hold out!"
"I know... dang it...!!"
At this rate, it will only get worse.
At this rate, the fortress will crumble.
At this rate, everyone will die.
At this rate——
"If that's how it is... then sink... or swim...!"
——Everything ending at this rate, was something "Witch of Aurora" could not accept.
While maintaining a large-scale magic, Mari performed a double magic and chanting. She wanted to create a chance to attack, but targeting the enemy in this situation was impossible.
Then——she needs to call out an existence that would create confusion.
That's what she bet on.
【"If ye doth not tread ov'r living insects, doth not tread ov'r grass, doth not desire destruction of life, respond to mine call. I shine with that radiance. I shine with nobility. Respond to me, respond to me, o' precious beast, let us hear thy beautiful neigh. Come... come...!"】

Along with a chant, Mari closed her eyes and sent her consciousness to another world.
Passing through the distant time and space, Mari's consciousness arrived in that world.
Mari felt that world to be nostalgic. When she was taught basics of summoning magic from the director of the orphanage, she played around by coming in contact with presences in different worlds like this. Even though the existences from another world were capable of feeling her presence, they couldn't understand the words she spoke. That's why, she always just stared at the beautiful beast standing still in a spring in of different world.
The beast too, only stared at her.
Still, she was able to feel that the beast had took a liking to her. It may have been just her imagination. She might have been mistaken. But believing in that was the only way to survive now.
Respond to me... please...!
The beast usually standing in the spring, was Mari's hope.
The beast noticed Mari.
And as if responding to her wish, the light in its gentle eyes was reflected in the water.
————It responded!
Mari's consciousness returned to this world and she opened her eyes wide.
And, materializing a huge magic circle behind herself, she spoke.

"Come, Sacred Beast——□Kirin□!"

Sound disappeared from the world for a moment. The Einherjars on spot stopped shooting and their gaze moved to the magic circle Mari made.
The heartless battle dolls, Einherjars have felt a foreign existence was being summoned.
And the next moment——breaking through the magic circle, a beast covered with richly-coloured scales tore through space.
Raising its front hooves high, the appearance of it standing on the hind legs as it let out a voice was beautiful, it was undeniably a magical organism——a Sacred Beast □Kirin□.
Sage and his group, Yuzuho and his group who have communicated with magic looked up at the beautiful beast, astounded.
Even that Mother Goose looked in surprise from the sky, her eyes wide open.
"Impossible... while using that large-scale magic, you summoned a Sacred Beast...?"

Mother Goose denied it as something impossible.
Sacred Beast Summoning was a magic of same degree of difficulty as Hero Summoning. To withstand using it, one required to sacrifice at least tens of thousands of people. Even more so with a Kirin who governs four elements in Chinese mythology's world, a race reigning at the top of the auspicious beasts.
Although there were chants and summoning operative procedures, there was no historical records of succeeding. Even making contact with them was impossible. Much less calling them out, it was as impossible as overturning heaven and earth.
Could such a young girl pull off something that seemed like it had come from old tales?
While Mother Goose was astonished, Mari stroked the Kirin's fur and moved her cheek closer to it.
As if responding to that, the Kirin chirped quietly.
"Please... protect everyone."
The Kirin understood Mari's feelings and neigh again, standing on its hind legs.
Unlike the neigh from earlier, this one was ferocious and rough.
Immediately after its hind legs let out a loud sound——the Kirin clad in magical power of aurora *galloped in the air.*
The Kirin didn't need a scaffolding. Surpassing the law of the worlds was natural for it.
Any place its hoofs trod upon were equal to prairie spreading as far towards the horizon as an eye can see.
And the brilliant, colourful scales captivating the viewers as well as——a shining horn on its forehead like a treasured sword, was something no creatures in creatoin were allowed to touch.
The only ones who could touch it and were unharmed, were those recognized as a benevolent by the Kirin.
Therefore——the Einherjars not possessing a heart were unable to stand in the way of Kirin's gallop.
Leaving a rainbow veil behind it, the Kirin rushed through an army of Einherjars. Instead of flying in the air, it galloped through it. The untouchable horn tore apart the Einherjars solid armour like paper, the magic bullets that tried to hit it, were dispersed by the scales.
Kirin's suicidal rush lasted only for an instant.
The Einherjars surrounding Mari and the others were gone, erased by the Kirin's gallop.
And then the Kirin slowly returned to Mari, gracefully rubbing against her face.
It's said that magical organism can become emotionally attached to humans.
That was probably true.
But the Kirin didn't attach itself emotionally to Mari, but rather revered her way of doing things.

As a proof of that, the amount of magical power Mari consumed in order to use Sacred Beast Summoning, was very, very small.
Most likely, this Kirin was the first magical organism that *wished to be summoned and hurried to visit by itself.*
"...thank you."
When Mari said her thanks and stroked its mane, the Kirin let out a shrill neigh and once again jumped into a tear in space and time.
After annihilating the Einherjars, Mari glared at Mother Goose who floated in the sky.
"...I will stop you. I will end this war."
"....."
"I'll protect Takeru and everyone...!"
Her eyes full of determination clashed with Mother Goose's cold eyes.
In response to Mari's words, everyone behind her entered combat readiness again.
Even though the Einherjars were wiped out in a moment, Mother Goose continued standing in the sky without any sign of being upset.
"That was quite something. To achieve Sacred Beast Summoning with a human body... you were my student only for about a month, but I'm proud of you as the chairman of Magic Academy."
"Don't screw around... there's no reason for you to do this...! Didn't you want to stop the war?!"
"Changing the world's structure into a correct one, is my earnest desire. For that sake, I need to kill Ootori Sougetsu. The tragedy that happened in here is a passing point for carrying out my purpose."
Kill Sougetsu.
Knowing what that choice would mean, Mari tried to relay to her that he was a God.
"That man is this world's God... no, he's this world's life itself, I knew that right from the start. If that man dies, magic will disappear from all over the world, the world will lose its balanced and collapse."
"...so you know it, and yet...?!"
"That is exactly why. As long as that man is the God, the world will face destruction sooner or later. Therefore... we will kill that man and replace him as a God."
Before Mari could understand the meaning of her words, Mother joined her hands once again and closed her eyes.
"Please rest assured. Once we become a god, we'll be able to make it so this never happened. The pollution of the world, this gruesome war, human death... we will return it all to how it was."
"You say you're going to become a God?!"
"Correct."
Mother Goose responded frankly.
Immediately after that, magical power was spread and magic circles covered the sky.

Like angels, an army of countless Einherjars descended from the magic circles.
"No way... this is ridiculous...!"
Mari was speechless as she recognized how mighty was the existence she was confronting.

"——This is, mercy."

Tears of blood dripped down from Mother's wide-opened eyes.
The situation was overturned again.
"So many Einherjars... how are we supposed to fight them...?!"
This time, she had no spell that she could use. Summoning a Sacred Beast like Kirin was something that couldn't be done one time after another. If it were two or three Einherjars they could fight against them, but these numbers are... there were so many of them they couldn't grasp their numbers.
The members of Heretic Alliance were unable to find a way to survive, the weapons they gripped in their hands trembled.

□□□

Hidden in the shadow of the rubble, his face pale, Takeru was unable to move.

Ikaruga put Takeru's head on her lap and placed her hand on his forehead. Her chilly palm was pleasant, but he couldn't afford to surrender to this comfort.
He could hear intense sound of combat. Although he couldn't see it from shade of the rubble, he could feel the aftermath of magic shake the earth.
"You can't. Don't move."
"...I can't... do that..."
"Be reasonable. We knew this would happen as we brought you along. We actually wanted to leave you behind."
Ikaruga made an unusually sad expression.
Her loving and affectionate heart could be felt through her palm. Don't go, is what Ikaruga's body temperature was saying.
Feeling it nearly impossible to shake off her hand, Takeru's chest hurt.
"Still, the reason we brought you… is because you're needed here. Probably, the only one who can end this fighting is you."
"....."
"It seems like everyone thinks so."
Kusanagi Kiseki. Ootori Sougetsu. Orochi and Mother Goose.
Ikaruga was convinced that the only one who could stand against them was Takeru.
Everyone wondered, why was it Takeru of all people. He shouldered grief since young, sacrificed everything in order to become stronger, has lived a life without ever tasting happiness of a normal person, and yet is tossed about at mercy of the world, was utilized and is suffering like this.
Why is his destiny to continue fighting endlessly?
It's so unreasonable, it makes me sick.
That's what Ikaruga thought.
"I'm the same... I hate the myself to no end for letting you fight."
"....."
Which time was it that he watched Ikaruga's self-loathing.
It was always a refreshing sight, but it wasn't something to be seen repeatedly. He could feel tightening in his chest.
Unconsciously, Takeru stroked Ikaruga's cheek. She downcast her eyes.
"...your turn is still ahead... in order to have your quarrel with your little sister, you need to conserve your strength. Leave the rest of those troublesome guys to us."
"....."
"Please be more selfish. Ignore stuff like the world or war, for now... just look at your own goal."
Be selfish, it might have been the first time he was told that.
After all, Takeru always thought only about himself. Stopping war, saving his little sister, was for his own sake after all.
He couldn't recall doing any self-sacrifice, he never intended any.
"I can't do that...either."
While saying so, Takeru raised his body.

Ikaruga's hand moved away from his forehead reluctantly.
As Takeru put his hand on the rubble, facing the battlefield, his back was far from looking reliable.
However,
"If even a single comrade of mine dies... my wish won't come true."
Only his will would never break.
Ikaruga muttered towards his back.
"...you're really... selfish."
Takeru smiled bitterly and started walking without looking back.
There wa no longer any need to worry about his blurry vision.
"Lapis, shall we go?"
He asked his partner.
"...of course, Host."
When he heard Lapis' voice, strangely, the screaming of his brain subsided.
Lapis would no longer try to stop Takeru. Just like his other comrades, she knew that there was no use trying to stop him.
And above all, Lapis was Takeru's partner.
The sword and its user were one.
Words were no longer necessary.
"Strengthen my body and all my nerves. Make it so my body won't break..."
"Understood. *I will protect you from your own ability.* I do not recommend using God Hunter form. Most likely, the soul fusion can be suppressed only one more time."
"I don't think that would work with Master as an opponent... in case it's necessary, we can only believe in Ouka."
Takeru materialized Mistilteinn in his right hand.
A hundred metres ahead, he could see Ouka, Mari and the others confronting Mother Goose.
Along with pillars of light, Einherjars descended from the sky.
Watching the spectacle reminiscent of the world ending from a distance, Takeru breathed in deeply and stopped.
I won't let even one of them die.
This power——I obtained it in order to protect, after all.
Takeru stopped suppressing the Soumatou.
——The world stopped.
——He could grasp the entire space clearly.
——In middle of headache that made him feel like he was going crazy, his consciousness was sharpened.
It was the same as back then. Just like when he fought Kurogane Hayato, he could feel as if himself losing human thoughts. His heart turned into one like that of a beast, only seeking one thing.
It turned into a heart of a demon.
Protect. Protect. Protect.
Protect thoroughly, protect all, obtain it.

Takeru squinted his eyes stained red and swung his sword in front of himself.
And——
"Summis desiderantes affectibus——"
At the same time as he pointed the sword at Mother Goose, he swung it sideways.
"——Malleus Maleficarum."
His body was wrapped by armour, strength filled him.
Now, let's go. Let's go protect our comrades.
Takeru put the sword in the sheath, hooked his finger against the collar and hoarded repulsive force with abandon.
Then submerged his waist low and focused all his nerves on using his legs like springs.
A seething hot sigh leaked. In the stopped word, even his breath stopped.
Meanwhile, Takeru started moving.
At the same time he raised his face, he released the spring of his legs.
"Kusanagi Double-Edged style————Heavenly Evil Spirit."
Two hundred metres left until reaching first enemy. It mattered not that they were floating fifty metres above the ground.
For Takeru as he was now——one step was enough.
The moment he used his legs to spring up, he was already in front of the first Einherjar.
Even if they were given souls of veteran warriors, they couldn't capture this movement. He released the blade from the sheath and cut apart the enemy diagonally all at once.
There was no change after the slash. The armour hit by the impact of the slash had sloo...oowly, burst.
Before the Einherjar was crushed, he kicked off its wreckage and assaulted next Einherjar from surprise.
"——Mantis Slope."
Rotating forward, he smashed Lapis' blade into Einherjars' brain.
Immediately after the blade hit its head, to increase the slashes' power he kicked the back of the blade.
Then using the Einherjars' head as a scaffold, he jumped again.
"Extend the blade."
He couldn't hear the response. However, just as he instructed her to, Lapis extended the blade as far as possible.
Once the blade extended up to fifty metres, Takeru squeezed the blade behind his waist and twisted his body.
"——Single Wheel."
Using the omnidirectional sword-drawing technique, Takeru cut down twenty Einherjars in the sky at once.
Remaining in the surroundings were fifteen of them.

His vision had started to flicker. If he doesn't hurry, he won't be able to go back. Since the targets for protection included his own life, the timing for quitting it was also important.
"——Unicorn's Destructive Lance!"
Therefore, Takeru further accelerated.
"——Yamata no Orochi!"
Ten remaining, five, three.
Using up all his techniques, Takeru approached the limit.
"■■■■■■■■■■!!"
He roared like something that wasn't human and sent the last Einherjar back to the afterlife.
After slaughtering nearly forty of them, Takeru landed in front of Ouka and the others.
He slowly sheathed the sword.
Immediately after the collar hit the sheath with a metallic sound, he put on a lid on Soumatou.
That moment——more than half of the Einherjars blew up.
In middle of something swirling that couldn't be described as impact nor air turbulence, seeing Takeru appear in front of them before they realized, Ouka and the others opened their eyes wide.
Everything happened in an instant. They were distracted by the Einherjars exploding one after another, and the next moment Takeru was in front of them.
"...Takeru...?"
Ouka called out to Takeru's back, who was on his knees and couldn't move.
His body shook for a few seconds, but he stood up right after that.
"Just now... did you do that...?"
When Ouka asked that with a trembling voice, Takeru turned around looking as he usually did.
He had the usual, good-natured smile.
"I've made you worry. I'm all right now."
Hitting his chest with a fist, Takeru said that trying to reassure everyone.
The 35th Platoon's members understood it was a bluff at a glance.
There was blood dripping from his right eye.
Takeru immediately wiped off his eye with fingers. His right eye was blind.
"Regenerating optic nerves as soon as possible, reconnecting... please refrain from using Soumatou for long periods of time."
Responding with affirmatively in his mind, he looked at his comrades with just one eye.
Everyone probably didn't know what happened. That's how fast Takeru was when attacking the Einherjars.
In order not to worry them, he put on the usual wry smile and tried to say something.
But,
"——As usual, you're horrible at using those techniques."

Hearing a voice from behind him, Takeru turned around vigorously.
There was Mother Goose floating in the air. And one more person, a figure staring at Takeru from on top of the rubble.
For a moment, Takeru couldn't tell who was it.
But there was only one person who would talk to him this way.
However, standing there was a young man. His age was about the same as Takeru's. His long black hair was carried by the wind, his crimson eyes glared at Takeru, and he carried a sword on his shoulder. Seeing the raised chin and fangs peeking from his mouth as he smiled, it can't be, Takeru thought.
One shoulder was exposed and bloody, but Takeru was familiar with the kimono he was wearing.
Above all, the shape of his face——resembled Takeru's a lot.
"You, it can't be... Master...?!"
"Yup. Kakaka, what's with yer' face, surprised by my youthfulness?"
The youth laughed merrily.
That distinctive laughter was without a doubt, that of Kusanagi Orochi's.
But, what did this mean? Orochi's actual age was over hundred and fifty years, his appearance should have been that of a forty-year old. But right now he looked like a twenty-year old. Even his voice was just like Takeru's.
"Even though I got myself vampire cells embedded, 's not like I'm eternally young y'know. In preparation for battle of my lifetime, I've supplied myself a 'lil."
"Supplied...? What with...?!"
As Takeru asked warily, Orochi raised the edges of his mouth and laughed evilly.

"——I ate 'em. About half the humans in this city."

Doubting his ears, Takeru's back froze.
Ate?
Half the people in the city that had hundreds of thousands citizens?
Then was that why they didn't meet any people on the way to the academy?
"To say, after having the cells embedded, I've become a half-vampire... Dhampir, was it? A state close to somthin' like 'dat."
"……ghh."
"That race was convenient since long ago y'know. They continued to research them as they embodied perfect immortality. And, that'd make me the only successful result of the research."
Takeru heard of that before.

The race called Vampires had gone extinct a thousand years ago. There was an urban legend that a mixed species of humans and vampires called Dhampirs has survived. Dhampirs' existence wasn't confirmed and they only existed in history books about history from a thousand years ago.
However, it was a fact that the science and the magic science both studied it actively, the witches experimented with transplanting vampire cells midway through Witch Hunt War.
Which resulted with failures. It was said there were no successes, but...
Orochi called himself a successful example.
Dhampirs were rid of the Vampire's disadvantages.
They were still semi-immortal, could heal their wounds by sucking blood, and could stop themselves from ageing.
Orochi wiped off the blood on his mouth with a hand and a spat out a toothpick he was biting on.
"Really, I sure was rejuvenated thanks to 'dat. My first meal in hundred and fifty years sure was delicious."
"....."
"Did'ya know? The saying 'you can't fight on an empty stomach' was actually left behind by one of Kusanagi's ancestors."
"....."
"Laugh, Takeru. It was a joke."
Still glaring, Orochi laughed as he looked down at Takeru.
Even among Kusanagi, Orochi was a heretic. To this man, since he had a soul of a demon, he'd be glad to have the body of a demon as well.
But... Takeru believed that he had human feelings.
Strict, merciless, selfish and self-centred, but he was also caring and reliable.
Takeru thought of him as of a second father.
And yet...
And yet——!
"——!! WHAT THE HELL YOU DOIN' DAMMIT!!"
His face distorting in anger and sorrow, Takeru cried out.
The moment he tried to move, Orochi pointed the sword he had on his shoulder at Takeru at speed unable to grasp with one's sight.
Everyone felt chills.
No one in this place was able to move.
There was difference in mettle. They were on different levels. Their quality as organisms was different.
The dread was equal or even greater than that they felt when facing Kurogane Hayato, their survival instincts as living organisms itself screamed.
"What, ya ask... same thing you are. I'm moving in order to achieve my own goal. To bring back Mikoto... dat's all."
"And for that you ate people of this city...? Unrelated people... women, children...?!"

"Yeah, I ate 'em. When it comes to blood, younger are better y'know. As long as Mikoto's revived and can live a normal life, I don't give a shit 'bout this world."
Takeru's vision was dyed red.
He felt countless debts of gratitude to Orochi. Trusted him. Felt close to him. Respected him.
However——Takeru could no longer forgive the man in front of him.
Not as a demon, not as Kusanagi Takeru.
The human part that rooted itself inside Takeru was furious, unable to forgive him.
"What's with ya, bein' a full-fledged ally of justice, huh... are ya really a Kusanagi?"
"If destroying this world is what you want, you're my enemy...!"
"Destroy? Aah... don't worry. Once Mother and I become a God, we can turn everythin' back to how it was y'know? Do a reset. All the folks who died will be back too. Hahaha! There's no better happy end is there?!"
Gripping the sword with his left hand Orochi spread his arm and said so. It was as if that was all just a bonus on top of getting what he wants.
Takeru clenched his back teeth soundly, outraged.
"Eat shit...! I'm only interested in now, only this moment...! I won't acknowledge you!"
"....."
"Even if all that's remaining is despair, no matter how painful it is, it's meaningless if I don't *save this world!*"
He raised his sword and pointed it at Orochi.
Orochi squinted and stared at Takeru a little enviously.
"Must be feelin' good not to have lost anythin' yet... well, neither of us got any intention of understanding each other, eh. Indeed indeed, that's Kusanagi for ya."
".....!"
"No understandin', no acceptance... then——what'cha gonna do, Takeru? C'mon what, Takeru. With that sword pointin' at me, that blade, that point of a sword——WHAT'CHA GONNA DO ABOUT MYSELFF?!"
Raising his chin, stirring Takeru up with his words, Orochi shouted showing his fangs together with both joy and anger.
Takeru resolved himself and confronted that anger from the front.

"Kusanagi Double-Edged style's initiate, Kusanagi Takeru! Master... I'm going to——cut you down!"

On the other hand, Orochi slowly swung his shining sword and received Takeru's declaration of war joyously.

"Kusanagi Double-Edged style's instructor, Kusanagi Orochi——I'll give ya a trashing! Come at me, stupid disciple!"

Then, Orochi turned away and leaped, moving deeper into the academy.
It wasn't that he was fleeing. Orochi wanted an one-on-one showdown with Takeru.
"Takeru, leave this place to us."
Ouka put her hand on Takeru's shoulder and said so.
"But...!"
"It's fine. Thanks to you, quite a lot of Einherjars were disposed of. Follow that man. We'll deal with the witch."
Takeru stopped for a moment, but seeing other of his comrades nod, he clenched his sword.
"——Sorry, I leave it to you!"
Leaving those words behind, Takeru chased after Orochi.
Honestly speaking, Takeru wanted to fight Orochi alone as well.
It wasn't that he didn't trust in his comrades' power.
It wasn't his pride as a swordsmanship either.
In the past, Orochi once said.
——Men of Kusanagi don't use words to talk. We're dumb y'know, so we can't converse well.
——That's why we Kusanagi, talk with our swords.
"....."
Takeru remembered these words even now.
There was no choice but to clash.
Orochi said that they can't understand each other, but Takeru didn't think so yet.
If they can only talk through sword, he'll swing it with his all and learn Orochi's real intentions.
There has to be some reason. Orochi wouldn't slaughter the weak for his own selfishness and then try make it as if nothing happened.
Takeru still hasn't believed that Orochi would be that inhuman.
No. He didn't want to believe.

Crystal Vanish (□□□□□□□□□□) - It's written "The Way Crystal Glitters" (□□□□ □□□□) and read as "Crystal Vanish". The Japanese reading is quite ambigious.
Aurora Fortress (□□□□□□□□□□□□) - It's written "Fortress of Light" (□□□□) and read as "Aurora Fortress".

Chapter 4 - The White Witch of the East

After Ouka and the others saw off Takeru, they once again confronted Mother Goose.
Despite what she said to Takeru, the situation wasn't turned around. They had to deal with the remaining Einherjars and Mother Goose.
"The enemy are summoned Einherjars, but as usual their bodies are that of Dragoons covered with magic-absorbent and anti-magic materials, in other words, Magical Dragoons... mere imitations with hero souls affixed to them. Most likely, the only thing summoned with Hero Summoning were the souls."
Thanks to information obtained from the wreckage during the battles in the past, Ikaruga was familiar with the mechanism behind Einherjars. Just like magic-absorbent materials were used for making instant charms, Magical Dragoons must have been instant charms for successful artificial Hero Summoning.
"Although it feels like they can be summoned endlessly, there's definitely a number limit, their uptime shouldn't be too long either."
But Ikaruga didn't mean to say that they had a chance of winning thanks to that.
There were quite a lot of Einherjars left, and their operator, Mother Goose was still alive and well.
"...won't you back down? Despite what Orochi said, I do not feel any need of sacrificing you."
"....."
"This is my wish. Please, I would like you to stop fighting any longer."
Considering what Mother Goose said, it seemed like she gave them some grace time.
As if to say she's not going to do anything as long as they don't do anything, Mother Goose remained unmoving in a prayer's posture.
Looking up they felt compassion and endless impudence.
What on earth was she talking about after causing such destruction and slaughter. They hadn't the least intention of backing down after all this time.
The teams other than the 35th Platoon were the same.
They had no intention to reconcile with nor forgive her.
"Ootori-dono... leave the Einherjars to us. I would advise 35th Platoon to confront the White Witch."
Sage stood back to back with Ouka and said so.
"Can you guys deal with these numbers?"
When she asked, he turned his sword around.
"Even if not as well as you, but we still call ourselves elite... above all, we owe you. Leave it to us."

Ouka was puzzled hearing him say "owe".
It would be one thing if it was Takeru, but Ouka didn't remember anything that would put Sage in her debt.
"One day, I intend to properly show you my thanks. I'd like to finish this fight without either of us dying."
"Wait... did I meet you somewhere before?"
"No. We met for the first time when we formed the alliance."
Sage put on a little smile and started walking towards the Einherjars together with his subordinates.
"Go. Go and end it... this futile war."
She wanted to say something towards his back, but before she could she saw the members of Gods' Embers chase after him.
"I don't owe you anything, but making you owe me here doesn't seem too bad."
"...Mikado."
"It seems like it's your speciality to fight single, powerful enemies, but we are more suited to fighting groups of enemies."
Without looking back even once, Yuzuho walked away together with her subordinates.
"Once the war is over, I look forward to meeting you as enemies."
Although fearless, the tone of her voice wasn't gentle at all.
Furthermore, even Kyouya moved away from Ouka and the others.
"I'll do whatever I like. You should be doin' the same."
With Nero on his shoulder, Kyouya moved towards the Einherjars with strong movements.
"I've said it before, but I've no intention of settlin' in the Small Fry Platoon. I'll be movin' flexibly."
"...Kirigaya, you..."
You don't have to struggle alone any longer.
The moment she wanted to say that, Kyouya's shoulders trembled with laughter.
"My revenge ain't over yet. I'll murder that shitty priest and that shitty Chairman. You've nothing to do with this struggle of mine. I need to be the one to do it... I won't move on unless I do it...!"
"....."
"If it's you, you'll understand... Ootori! I'm goin' to do what I need to do for my revenge, that's all!"
Ouka couldn't say anything towards Kyouya's back as he rushed out.
It was because she understood his feelings to a painful extent.
There was no point unless you fulfilled your revenge by yourself. In the end, Ouka too had fulfilled her revenge by herself. It didn't end with just emptiness inside her thanks to her comrades and Takeru.
Also, Kyouya now had an person important to him remaining. As long as Yoshimizu Akira was there, his revenge won't end with emptiness.

Ouka closed her eyes, and together with comrades faced Mother Goose once again.
And,
"...Saionji, take Suginami and chase after Takeru together."
Hearing Ouka's words, Usagi tried to return a question.
"You're the only one who can provide optimal assistance to Takeru were he to show an opening."
"B-but... I..."
She had no confidence that she'll be able to catch up with those movements.
Of course. Ouka and the others were overwhelmed by the speed they were unable to follow with their eyes. It would be a heavy burden to Usagi who hadn't received any magical strengthening.
But all of them were forced into the same, desperate battles. Despite that, the one who would help out Takeru the most, was most likely Saionji, Ouka thought.
Mari lined up next to Ouka and shrugged.
"I agree. You've quit being human far more than you think, Usagi-chan."
"But I haven't quit being one at all?!"
She felt she was told something horrible.
"You always save us at critical moments. Our Usagi-chan somehow ends up getting the best bits!"
"Right."
Ouka responded to Mari and reloaded the stake-firing mechanisms on her both arms. Mari expanded magic circles on her feet.
To Usagi, it felt like their backs said "take care of Takeru".
It seemed like Usagi's body would start trembling. She wondered where did the trembling come from.
Was it fear? Tension? Or maybe fatigue?
She noticed that it was actually excitement, because the only thing trembling was her body, but her heart was tinged with heat.
Bearing the gun's belt on her shoulder, Usagi said to the backs of the two.
"——I will not acknowledge your dying, the two of you!
" "Roger!" "
And then, Usagi started running.
To where Takeru was.

□□□

Magic Academy West Side's Seventh Student Squad.
With the captain who held abominable magic power, the squad was composed of members with many faults and was entrusted with dirty work of the academy's dark part.
No matter how much they tried to get new achievements, they only continued to pile up stigma. When they were instructed by the higher-ups to leave their comrade to die, they left and decided to join the Heretic Alliance.
Despite becoming heretics, they didn't lose their pride as purebloods.
Protecting the weak, guiding the weak was pureblood's duty.
No matter the reason, they wouldn't forgive those who trample the weak.
Therefore——they despised this war.
They will continue to lend a helping hand to those who need it, regardless of whether they have magic power or not.
They will not show any mercy to those needed to be subjugated.
No matter how much they are stigmatized, even if they aren't understood at all, they will continue to embrace their pride.
"...you guys. Let me say thanks... for being with me until now. I'm sorry for always troubling you."
Told that by Sage, his comrades paled in astonishment.
Without noticing that, Sage tried to continue.
"If I manage to survive this battle, I..."
"C-C-Captain sir! Let's leave it at that! Don't say any more!"
"T-that's right. Whenever you say such things it never ends too well!"
"You bunch! You don't have to tell him that so clearly, right?! Captain is also bothered by that y'know?!"
The upset members prevented him from raising strange flags.
In fact, Sage always said this kind of thanks to his comrades in hopeless situations, talking about giving a toast once they're back or about eating mozarella tomato pasta, then leaving sentimental words he rushed in a suicidal attack.
At times like these they ended up in huge transcendental pinch, so his subordinates wanted him to have some self-awareness but...
"Fuu... you're right. No point saying something that doesn't fit me... huh."
Acting at his own pace, Sage ignored his members' words and smiled in nihilistic manner.
It was always like this. Although Sage was a reliable captain, but he was also quite an airhead, making his comrades at mercy of whatever he thought up.
However, even including that, his subordinates admired him.
For better or worse, he was a man who didn't know lies.
"Words are needless, huh. Let's go then. It's not like we started facing hopeless difference in strength today."
Sage poised his swordwand "Hrunting" in front like a knight and expanded a rust-colour magic circle as he walked.

Seeing the abominable colour of his own, Sage squinted.
The ancient property "Rust"... because it reminded the Pureblood Party of bloodstains, it was hated as an abominable power.
However, Sage knew that it was impossible for the user's mind to be influenced by their property. Just like his adoptive older sister who fell into darkness despite holding a "Radiance" property that was opposite of his "Rust", human nature was determined by their experiences and memories.
Saving one of his comrades wasn't the only reason Sage had come to the outside world.
Sage was asked to by the father who misunderstood his beliefs and disinherited him.
In case something happens, I want you to stop your adoptive sister, he said.
But when he had come to this side, that case had been resolved by Ootori Ouka.
Thus, his only reason for fighting left was to stop this war.
"...we finally have a just cause, a battle worth of us purebloods casting our bodies into. It's dissatisfying to have mechanical dolls as opponents, but there's a meaning to this fight."
Excellent. Without any hesitation, the Seventh Squad challenged this battle.
To stop this war.
Even if no one learns about it, this honour, this pride, it was appropriate for their own humiliation and regret for having acted and despised as a dirty squad.
"Seventh Student Squad's captain, Sage *Wallenstein*——heading out!"
Waving their wands, the Seventh Squad threw themselves into a honourable battle.

□□□

God's Embers' Sixth Miko's Guard Troop.
Starting as a coalition of religions, the organisation had changed into Gods' Embers who worshipped a completely new super-existence, but born in the organisation were several existences called "miko" who had a potential of being able of communicating with God.
But in fact, there was no miko who was capable of communicating with this super-existence that was God. The might of the miko's faith power capable of miracles... in other words, they were indicated by the amount of magic power and the intensity of their magic.

Among twelve mikos, the power of Sixth Miko was the weakest. Or rather, her miracles were lacking in showiness.
The First Miko whom Mikado Yuzuho used to serve had the most power and had many followers. Even so, after sticking to the First Miko for some time, Yuzuho started to doubt her miracles that were only showy.
She finally snapped when she met the Sixth Miko. Although her miracle powers were plain, Yuzuho was impressed by her benevolence and faith, then over the objections from her surroundings she had herself appointed as the Sixth Miko's Guards' captain.
It was noble of the strong to protect the weak.
But, for weak to try protecting the weak... that pious attitude of the Sixth Miko charmed Yuzuho. As for what happened after she was appointed as the captain of the Sixth Miko's Guard, it was just as she told Takeru when they formed alliance.
Along with a prayer, Yuzuho started walking towards an Einherjar alone. Her subordinates in the back stopped, fell on their knees and started engraving magic circles with their overlapping hands.
"""""We are blessed by God's hand, and we become capable of miracles. We become apostles of pure spring, we become those who banish the wicked."""""
As they spoke the "teaching" that was the same as a chant, the subordinates connected the engraved circles with the circle beneath Yuzuho's feet. The engraved circles have caused Yuzuho's circle to shine even stronger.
Then, the moment Yuzuho stopped her legs and hit the ground with her spear, her body was wrapped by a silvery-white armour.
"We, shall become the foundation for the weak."
Yuzuho opened her eyes wide and released the power of her subordinates that was inside her.
The five subordinates strengthened Yuzuho, and she held that power in order to strike down evil.
That was the Sixth Guard's cooperation.
"God's Embers' Sixth Miko's Guard Troop's captain, Mikado Yuzuho——heading out!"
This was——the great strength to protect the weak.

□□□

Kirigaya Kyouya carried Nero on his shoulder and with a smile, looked up at the sky.
Raindrops started to fall from the clouds.
It felt unsettling. It felt sinister. He could even hear the sounds of thunder.
——It was great weather for a battle.
"Hey, shitty gun."
Kyouya casually called out to Nero.
□"…….what is it?"□
"You told me right, that there's no meanin' to contractin' with me unless I have revenge in my heart."
□"……."□
"But in the first place, ain't you all Chairman's property? Whether Ootori Ouka's Vlad or you, what point is there for you to cooperate with us?"
Hearing Kyouya's question, Nero snorted.
□"We Relic Eaters have no goal. We make a contract, receive the compensation and just fight. How were we born, how did we receive personalities, I guess only Vlad's the only one who cares about that. I in particular couldn't care less what happens to Master or Akira y'knoww□. If you die I'll just contract with someone elsee, even if you turn cripple I'll just switch out."□
"……."
□"Having a Master like you is moooost troublingg y'know. You don't die nor you turn into a cripple… the contract meaninglessly continues and your passion went puff, somewhere. I'm so hungry I can't bear it."□
I don't care as long as I get my compensation.
In other words, I'm fine as long as I get to eat and rampage, is what Nero said.
Kyouya smiled.
It was simple. Knowing there was nothing else behind it, it was so sickeningly simple it made him laugh.
Thinking of it now, contracting with Nero might have been inevitable.
Nero's nature was similar to his own.
If it was so troubling then she should just discard the contract, but Nero didn't do that.
Why was it?
□"Still… your vengeance was most delicious of all I've had so far. Aaa-ah, what a waste what a waaaste."□
So that's why she stuck to him.
Good grief, she absolutely dishonest.
If she likes him, then she should just say so.
"You say I've got no vengeance in my heart? You seriously sayin' that?"
Kyouya spat down and laughed baring his teeth.
"I'll feed you the best from now on…! If yer hungry then eat all ya want!"
He caused his anger to boil over.

At the same time, a dark-green magic circle was deployed beneath his feet and poison started eroding Kyouya's body.
"I'm at my best now, shitty gun! Nothin' ties me, I've no hesitation, there's no one stoppin' me, only someone waitin' for me to come back...! So there's only one thing to do! I'll smash you with all my anger for my enemies, there's no stuff better than this is there!"
"....."
"——Revenge! Long-awaited revenge! Let's do it Nero! Slaughter them! Let's enjoy blowing away those fuckers' heads!
Revenge. That was their power. *The power to survive.*
After saying so he extended his tongue and with an extremely vulgar expression, Kyouya started running.
The first Einherjar that caught his eye. That first one to take revenge on. No grudge against him? Who cares. Everything in front of him were enemies to take revenge on. Who cares if they're good or evil. Just blow them away randomly to forget himself.
When they were still 15th platoon's students, everyone said they're weaklings. Kyouya knew they were laughed at in the shadows as a gathering of ordinary half-assed people who made a clique and acted all-arrogant. Even if they did their best they could only get 4th or 3rd place. They didn't have a sliver of talent, even though they did their best they stood in place.
As their captain, Kyouya was the same. He was aware of the fact he was a weakling.
So what, he laughed.
No matter how much he struggled, he couldn't reach the geniuses.
So what about it, he laughed.
I'm fine being weakling. I'm fine being vulgar.
"...I don't like it if it's too refreshing you know."
"Disliking food without trying it is no good!"
Leaping forward, Kyouya shoved the shotgun in front of the Einherjar's eyes.
A buckshot from zero distance.
But the power was too low. Even from so close it was no good.
So what.
Rapid fire. He earnestly pulled the trigger time after time.
It's still no good. Enemy Einherjar won't go down.
The railgun's aimed his way. The magic bullet is fired.
Kyouya awkwardly rolled on the ground and avoided the magic bullet. He stood up maintaining the momentum from rolling and changing into tonfa form this time, he smashes into the Einherjar.
No good. It doesn't work. Einherjar won't go down. Weak. It's too weak. Not enough, not enough, not enough.
Not enough, not enough, more, more more beat him down beat him beat him beat him!

That's how I unsightly continued to do so far!
There's nothing else but tenacity in me!
"URRRRAAAAAaaaAAaaAaAAAaAAAAaAAAaaaaaAAAAAAA!!"
Shot after shot, he moved slightly forward. His power increased.
And then finally... Kyouya got rid of one Einherjar.
With his breathing rough, Kyouya laughed merrily covered in sweat.
As if to surround him, three Einherjars floated in the air.
Kyouya laughed. Nero Laughed.
□"It wasn't too bad. Hunger□ is the best spice they say, right? "□
In this hopeless situation, Nero provoked him.
Fine by me. That's how it has to be.
He raised joyful Nero in tonfa form.
And then Kyouya,
"AntiMagic Academy's 15th Platoon——revenge, start uppp!!"
Together with his comrades' regrets, he had gleefully struggled against powerful opponents.
To survive until he wins.

□□□

"So, no matter what happens... you aren't going to stop your resistance, are you."
Mother Goose who was devoted to her prayers had opened her eyes slightly and looked at Ouka and Mari.
"Benevolent goddess wannabe, huh. What you're doing is just a massacre. We shall judge you right here!"
"...you took away the place we belong to, don't think we'll forgive you!"
"Your anger is just. I do not think you can understand our dignity. However, you should avoid tasting pain and suffering."
Mother didn't turn the two's anger nor ignored it, she received it like a mother speaking with her children.
But Ouka and Mari weren't as well-brought up and adult as to back down obediently with just this.
Ouka turned Vlad's two guns at Mother Goose and fired stakes. Mari too, had released the hoarded magic power to send Mother an □Aurora Canon□.
Although they were nearly impossible to defend from or avoid, the two didn't think their attacks would get through right away. The enemy was the

leader of entire Valhalla. Learning what kind of abilities she has was the priority.
However, even as the stake and the shell closed on her, Mother Goose didn't show any movements to avoid or gestures to build up a protective barrier.
And, the moment the attack seemed to have hit her,
——Suddenly, Mother Goose's figure disappeared.
"Transfer magic!"
Ouka shouted and tried to stay vigilant of her surroundings.

"You two cannot win against me."

Along with the voice, something as cold as ice touched Ouka's spine.
The moment Mother Goose's fingertips touched, indescribable terror assaulted her.
Even though she wanted to avoid, her body wouldn't move. The intimidation from behind was extraordinary. Orochi's thirst for blood was incredible, but this woman was on a different level.
Feeling as if they were stared from the darkness of the abyss by something huge enough to cover entire world, the two desperately swallowed their screams.
They realized it was very likely they will be killed.
"...it's simple for me to obliterate the two of you like this. If possible, I don't want to do it. The reason for that, is your friend, Kusanagi Takeru-san."
Saying Takeru's name, Mother closed her eyes.
"If I kill you, he will most likely enter God Hunter form without any hesitation. If possible, I would like to avoid that... so that it doesn't go as that man wishes it to."
".....nhh."
"You already know Ootori Sougetsu's goal, don't you? If God Hunter is complete and kills him, the world will perish. We can't afford to let the "Seat of God" to be lost along with him. Also for the sake of us arriving at godhood."
Mother's Goose tone of voice lowered.
In it, sounded a firm will.
The will said, I won't give you any more grace.
"——Back down, this is your last chance."
Mother said that in low, rumbling voice.

Even though their bodies shook with fear they couldn't find an epithet to describe, Ouka and Mari looked back and summoning all their courage and fighting spirit leaped away.
"I refuse!" "Not happening!"
Ouka fired a stake and Mari had drawn a bow with 「Aurora Arrow」.
As expected, Mother Goose's figure disappeared.
Ouka spread her wings and Mari expanded the flight rings on her legs, both soaring high into the sky at high speed.
They couldn't stop moving.
The enemy can appear from anywhere.
Rise up and try circling at least a little——
"「Geirskögul」"
A voice had come from above Mari as she rose up to the sky.
The moment she tried to look upwards in a hurry——a spear that looked like a giant bird has assaulted her back.
"No way——ghghh?!"
The size of that giant bird was comparable with that of a jumbo jet.
It was mostly luck that she was able to avoid it. Hearing the voice she had corrected the flight path downwards and fortunately, she got out of it with just her shoulder being gouged out.
As she held down the blood spilling from her shoulder, Mari tried to launch an attack on Mother Goose overhead.
"「Skeggjöld」"
However, Mother Goose who should have been above, was suddenly below Mari.
A huge axe reminiscent of a guillotine assaulted Mari.
It's blade's length surpassed a hundred metres.
In addition to the constant usage of transfer magic, the scale of her magic attacks was too huge. The magic circle deployment speed and operative procedure structuring speed were instant. It wasn't something a human could do.
Just how much magic power did she have?
I can't avoid it, when Mari though that,
"Nikaido!"
Ouka flapped her wings and charged into Mari whose posture broke as if clinging to her.
Tackled, Mari's body took a 「 shape.
Thanks to that she was able to avoid it, but the moment Mari looked up to complain——Mother Goose was already ahead of where they avoided to and expanding her magic circles.
The multiple layers of magic circles folded over and over again, completely covering the sky like a geometric pattern.
"「Herja」"
A strange magic was activated.

An army of angels singing a chorus has suddenly appeared from the magic circles. Seeing the sight that looked like something out of myths, Mari paled.
"What's with you and your magic dammit!"
She had never seen or heard of it. She didn't even know whether it was summoning magic or attacking magic.
And above all, it was too huge to deal with.
"S-stop being slow and stupid!!"
Suddenly, Ouka kicked Mari away.
"Ootori Ouka?!"
At the same time as Mari screamed, Ouka was crushed by an army of angels.
Although Vlad stretched out a protective barrier just before that, Mari could see Ouka be swallowed by magic of non-standard intensity.
The army of angels disappeared right after crashing onto the ground. As if nothing happened, everything fell silent.
Soundlessly, Mother Goose has come down in front of Mari who stood in mid-air, stunned.
"My magic cannot be used by humans. It's natural that you haven't seen it before."
"...Angel Summoning...? You must be joking right..."
"No. It is not Myth Summoning. It is merely a reproduction of gods and Sacred Treasures of Norse Mythology's world using magic power. They are far from being the real thing, mere imitations."
Norse Mythology's world... just now, Mother Goose certainly said that.
While worried about Ouka's safety, Mari glared at Mother Goose.
There was a vital reaction from below. Ouka was alive. Mari had to earn some time for her to recover.
"You... aren't human, right?"
"....."
"I'm quite confident of myself too, you know... but the amount of your magic power is abnormal. Continuing after Hero Summoning you continuously use transfer magic, and the mysterious magic on top of that. It's not something you can do without a Magical Heritage."
Even if it can be used, it's not something a human can do. Mari was confident her predictions were on the mark.
This woman was most likely...
"I would like to resolve one misunderstanding, Hero Summoning is not my magic. It's my intrinsic performance."
Intrinsic performance... witches didn't have that kind of thing.
What had those were——
"As you might have guessed——I am a Sacred Treasure. My official name is 'Gungnir"... the spear of God's Authority that the chief god of the Norse Mythology's world, Odin had used."
"Gungnir...?"

It was a name of a weapon practically everyone heard of.
Odin's name too, was literally left behind in this world as a myth. The interference between the world of gods and human world had a variety of effects. Many of the S-class Magical Heritages were said to have been created thanks to the interference of Norse Mythology's gods, and among Einherjars there were many who have inherited factors of the gods.
"It seems like you know about me but... the Gungnir you know and I probably don't match, do they."
The origin of this world was the collision of the previous world with the world of the Norse Mythology. At the very least that was what was written in Mineshiro Kazuma's document, and the "Fragment of Mythological World" where the Heretic Alliance's headquarters were, was the best proof of that.
In other words, there was a high possibility of Norse Mythology's nonsense being left in this world.
"The legends of the Norse gods you know of are a result of the history being altered by the collision of worlds. It is not true that the Nordic gods were on friendly terms with humans. In the previous worlds, humans and gods were at war after all."
"....."
"Back then, humans artificially made an individual that was a fusion of a god and a human, as well as god-slaying Sacred Treasures, and were trying to destroy the Norse Mythology's world. That individual is the current Ootori Sougetsu."
"....."
"The world of Norse Mythology could exist thanks to Odin... by taking the Chief God's life they would able to destroy the world. That man had killed the gods all over the world, and in the end he tried to lay his hand on Odin. As his last act of struggle, Odin transferred the mythological world itself and had it collide with the human world."
Mother Goose squinted and looked down slightly.
"——That is this world's, this universe's origin. After the collision, the world was reconstructed and the history of the original world and the mythological world as well as their systems have mixed together, resulting with this."
"....."
"This world's magic is the gods' factor... the power of the gods itself. A concept that didn't exist in the previous world. Therefore, I'm going to set straight this world where's both magic and science, humans and witches ——"

"——Like I fuckin' care. Your talking isn't just boring but also damn long."

As if cutting short her story with a sharp knife, Mari knead magic power.
While making countless aurora-coloured magic circles in the sky, she ridiculed Mother Goose at full power.
"You start rattling on about stuff I didn't ask about, really. The world's origin? The war between gods and humans? Coooouldn't care less, at the very least, I'm not interested."
Making an expression as if she wanted to spit, Mari showed Mother Goose her middle finger.
"Stuff like world, god, who's good and who's bad, even if I know all of it, what I need to do doesn't change. I'm stopping you… that's unchanged."
That's why, there was no meaning in knowing.
She really didn't give a shit. It was just as Takeru said.
The truth is unnecessary. In order to get what they wanted, they had to get rid of Mother Goose and Orochi.
Seeing Mari try fighting in this situation, Mother Goose slightly furrowed her eyebrows.
'This war is for the sake of remaking this world in a correct form. You, who are a witch should know the distorted values of this world and the grief on the topic of discrimination against magic. I will correct that distortion, I shall give magic to all human beings and make a peaceful world."
"What you guys are going to do is to make it so that nothing happened, and then remake it from scratch right? Is this a damn game? Don't screw around."
Turning her middle finger towards Mother Goose like a gun's muzzle, Mari made a steep expression.
A huge magic circle had already filled the sky.
Mother Goose remained unmoving, she just prayed indifferently.
"What about people who found happiness in this world? What about people who love this world? Just because a self-proclaimed goddess doesn't like it, is no excuse to blank it out."
"…destruction, or restoration… there is no other way."
When Mother Goose muttered that as if enlightened, Mari opened her eyes wide.
"I'll pass on both! I'll change the world in my own way! I definitely won't let you make it so everything had never happened!"
Pouring out, magic power had dyed the sky with aurora.
The blow that had boasted of having strongest attack power among those Mari had mastered.
【Aurora Gate】
The preparations for activating it were complete. She had also completed a protective barrier preventing enemy from blocking the activation, there was no one capable of stopping Mari now.

"This world's hope, despair, sorrow and joy, they're all, all mine! ——As if I'd let you erase them!"
Cracks ran over the magic circle and a huge gate of light emerged from behind her. Many times larger than the one she had previously used, and many times more powerful, the gate roared.
That's when Mother Goose's red eyes were clouded black as if harbouring darkness inside.
"Enough speaking then."
With relaxed movement, Mother Goose held her right hand out to Mari.
And bending her fingers, the moment she clenched her hand lightly,
——Mari's left arm burst away from the root.
"——?!"
Without any idea what happened, Mari staggered in the air, sprinkling blood all over.
Next, Mother Goose quietly opened her clenched fist.
Matching her moves, this time Mari's leg was blown off.
There was no trace.
After seeing Mari start to crash down, Mother Goose closed her eyes.
"Just now, *I only transferred my magic power into your body.* Large amount of destruction isn't required to incapacitate a single human. Please watch over this world's rebirth as you slowly die."
The unavoidable blows have been unleashed from inside Mari's body.
Transfer magic's dreadfulness weren't just the surprise attacks.
Since it was able to deliver any substance anywhere, she should have noted this point first and foremost.
In front of the transfer magic, the protective barrier didn't make any sense at all.
"——Hh.....damn...it...!"
Just a step away from activating the 「Aurora Gate」 it had disappeared, magic power had dispersed in the air.
Although it seemed like Mari is going to crash to the ground after losing a hand and a leg, she had squeezed the last of her power and assaulted Mother Goose with her vanishing flying rings.
However, she didn't have much speed or power left. Staggering she approached Mother and was only able to swing her right fist.
With her eyes still closed, Mother Goose avoided it by diverting her upper body.
Mari's fist only grazed Mother's cheek and cut through the air.
Completely exhausted, Mari fell towards the ground.

□□□

Assaulted by an army of angels, Ouka was in a state where she barely maintained the original shape of her body.
She could assert that this was the most dangerous attack she ever received. Her throat was crushed, her limbs wouldn't move. If she only had her flesh and blood she would die instantly, even with Witch Hunter form she will probably die after a few minutes.
Even so, Ouka didn't give up.
"Vlad, start up the 'Dracula'... gather blood."
Despite the fact she was dying, her consciousness was clear. The anger against Mother Goose and the indignation towards herself for letting Mari fight alone was enough for reasons.
Just as ordered, Vlad did his best recovering the blood all over the city, but because Orochi had already sucked out the most of it, the amount of blood Vlad could recover was very small.
"Continuing combat is impossible. Death can be avoid'd but... this amount is too small."
"Nikaido is fighting alone! I can't just rest here alone! The sounds of combat ceased... hurry!"
As she grew impatient, Ouka's body was gradually regenerated.
Her throat was regenerated, the bones and skin of her limbs connected back, her breathing had also returned.
Although the recovery wasn't over yet, when Ouka forced her body to sit, a blunt sound had come from beside her.
When she turned her face in that direction, she saw Mari's appearance, bleeding.
Ouka raised her body and crawling, slowly approached Mari.
"Nikaido...?"
She reached out to touch Mari's body.
It was cold as ice.
Her chest rose up and down slightly. Somehow she was still breathing, but Mari's hollow eyes said how little of life was left in her.
Ouka's lips trembled, not knowing what to do she called out.
"What are you... you... what happened with your limbs...?"
"Don't 'you'...me...now..."
A faint voice responded.
There was consciousness. She could still be saved. Ouka bit her trembling lips.
"Ugh, Vlad! Give Nikaido a blood transfer and recover her! You can do that much, right?!"
"I can not allow it...! Master's body is still healing! If I transfer blood to someone else Master's life will be in danger!"
"I don't care! Do it!"

That's when Mari slapped Ouka's cheek.
But her palm only stroked Ouka's cheek before falling to the ground.

"...shaddup...don't be so noisy right at my ear...don't do... needless stuff..."
"Needless you say...? Don't screw with me...!! What about the promise with Takeru?! We're going to survive and go back to where we belong! If you're not here, Takeru... I...!!"
Mari touched Ouka's hand.
".....you will, use my blood."
Saying so, Mari raised the edges of her mouth.
"My blood... is probably most delicious of all... I mean, it's Nikaido Mari-chan's blood...isn't that natural...?"
"Don't be stupid...!! I can't drink your blood...!"
Feeling Mari squeeze her hand weakly, Ouka gasped.
".....hh."
"...what's with that face... makes me laugh..."
Seeing tears pool in Ouka's eyes, Mari said that, not even acting strong in particular.
It seemed like she suppressed bleeding with magic, but the blood loss was already lethal. If she doesn't get a transfusion, Mari will be beyond saving.
Despite being aware of that, Mari refused Ouka's help.
"You'll use my blood... in order to survive..."
".....but..."
"I won't die...as if I would...I promised...we're all going back alive...also, above aaall..."
Mari squinted looking at Ouka and smiled.
"I'm not giving you Takeru...he's mine...'s no way I'm dying....ghh, s-so..."
Along with another of the countless declarations of war, Mari's eyes regained their light.
Releasing the hand she held, Mari grasped Ouka's collar and pulled her closer.
And, along with her ghastly feelings, she said to Ouka.
"——Hurry up and go...! Go and beat that woman down!"
Ignoring the blood flowing from her mouth, she scolded Ouka.
In Mari's eyes there wasn't even tiniest determination to become a sacrifice.
Told this, Ouka was unable to refuse.
Since the moment they met, their relationship was one big quarrel. They collided repeatedly, competing over everything, it was stormy from the start.
But before Ouka realized, she relaxed herself around her. Mari was straightforward. She was much less hesitant than Ouka herself. That part of her was very similar to Takeru and had ended up easily destroying the wall in Ouka's mind.
Ouka admired a certain part of Mari. She was envious wishing she was as honest and straightforward.
Worst compatibility. Cats and dogs. But while that was true, they certainly acknowledged each other.
Ouka was entrusted with the rest by someone like that.

What kind of rival would she be if she didn't answer those expectations.
"…….Vlad."
Facing down, Ouka clenched her teeth.
Her blue eyes shone behind the long bangs.
Those eyes met with Mari's.
No more words were necessary. All that was left was to proceed according to desire.

"——Drink!"
"——Acknowledged."

Momentarily, Vlad's blood absorption started.
A magic circle appeared and attracted Mari's blood. Her blood entered Ouka's body.
Just as Mari had self-proclaimed, her blood was superb. A single drop held power equivalent to that of a hundred people. There was tremendous concentration of magic power and incredible life force.
At the same time, her memories and experiences, all of Mari had flowed into Ouka.
Her growing up, childhood dabbling in criminal acts. The warm memories of the orphanage. Tremendous sadness when she lost her family. The dark feelings towards Haunted.
Her love for Takeru so passionate it made Ouka embarrassed.
And——
——The new place she belonged to.
The trust and affection for her comrades, too strong to put in a word, irreplaceable feelings.
The pure will to protect.
Ouka had——carried all of it.
"...let's go...Ouka..."
Mari's hand moved away, she lied down on the ground.
Ouka stood up, long fangs peeked out from her mouth.
She wasn't alone.
This power belonged to the two of them.
"Yeah——let's go, together!"
And then, Ootori Ouka's and Nikaido Mari's counter-attack had began.

□□□

After defeating Mari, Mother Goose continued to stand in the air as if nothing happened.
"…….I will not ask for forgiveness."
Her expression slightly clouded, Mother Goose flapped her robe and tried to leave the location.
It wasn't that she didn't feel anything after massacring the human's in the city and killing Mari and Ouka with her own hands. Just like Lapis who was the same Sacred Treasure, she did have a soul.
It's not like she had a personality right from the start. The phenomenon of souls dwelling in Magical Heritage was something that happened by chance after the worlds' collision.
The only point that differed Gungnir from other weapons, was that she had memories of the previous world left in her. Lævateinn and Mistilteinn didn't have any memories, they were adapted to this reconstructed world from the beginning. Just like other Magical Heritages they contracted humans and started to form personalities by interacting with them. Just like a child growing as it looks at their parent…
But it wasn't so for Gungnir. Her personality was formed from the memories of the old world. After the world's restructuring, she hasn't contracted anyone even once.
All of it for the sake of the gods who had died… in order to change this world into the world of gods once again.
Not knowing human-like thinking, Gungnir acted as a servant of god, holding these memories inside her.
But despite that, she had become a human.
Naming herself as the White Witch of the East, Mother Goose, she interacted with the witches and was accepted by them in this world. Even without contracting, her interaction with people had made her grow.
She discarded her memories of the old world and lived as a human, leading witches is what I should do… she started to think.
However, when she learned that with Odin's disappearance, Ootori Sougetsu as the only one survivor holding divinity had become the God of this world, Mother Goose's goal changed to protecting this world.
On top of that, the result of her struggle was the choice to remake the world.
She also tried to make peace with Sougetsu and tried to stop him denouncing magic that was the heritage left behind by the gods.
□"This world… this world should continue existing as is."□

She once thought the same as Mari and Ouka, Takeru and the others. However, since Sougetsu's goal was destruction, her wish would never come true. Humans and witches contested each other in a war. After multiple wars and witnessing numerous death, Mother Goose learned of human ugliness.
If the worlds continues to survive, humanity will definitely follow the road of destruction.
It was too late for this world, even if the God doesn't die.
And, she started to think this way.
——I love this world, therefore, I shall remake it.
"A new world, where all the humans shall inherit gods' factors..."
——I love it, therefore I shall remake the world.
"A pure world where humans will not need to fight..."
——For that sake.
"I love this world, therefore... I shall... become a God."
Find Sougetsu and erase him from this world.
In addition, she'll activate 「Deification」 together with Orochi and retake the "God's Seat", then remake the world.
For this long-cherished wish, Mother Goose trampled countless lives, an intention to accomplish it dwelled in her allowing her to overcome the numerous deaths.
However——

"——Such love makes me sick...!"

A voice which seemed to have come from the bottom of hell.
Feeling thirst for blood, Mother Goose looked downwards.
A crimson shadow stared at her from inside the academy crushed by an army of angels.
Seeing that figure, Mother Goose furrowed her eyebrows.
"...Dracula."
Her murmur was tainted with disgust.
Ouka's figure glaring at her from below looked like the devil incarnate.
Although Mother Goose knew about the Relic Eaters' performance to some extent, Vlad wasn't sufficiently investigated. Even though a thousand years have passed since their extinction, it reminded her very much of the vampires' existence who were present in this world ever since its reconstruction.

The most powerful vampires called True Ancestors have despite their number nearly destroyed the world. Mother Goose acknowledged their annihilation as the only great achievement of Inquisition.
Vampires were a fierce race who had the power that was the natural enemy for the witches.
Moreover, the quality of Vlad's magic power was that of a True Ancestor. It was completely different from Orochi who only had cells transplanted in.
And it wasn't just that...
The magic power's property mutated? Vlad's property should be "Night Blood" but... that rainbow-like luster is...
It can't be, did she drink Nikaido Mari's blood? And that blood is affecting Vlad's magic power? To a level where it's visible with a naked eye?
That's impossible——Mother Goose shook her head. It happened right after that.
Ouka's figure disappeared.
"?!"
Mother was shocked. She disappeared? Transfer magic?
No. The entirety of the courtyard was wriggling with something black.
No, it's flying around?
Is that——a swarm of bats?
"Ah, no——!"
Mother Goose had forgotten about the existence of vampire-specific summoning magic. It was summoning of magical organisms impossible by anyone but the one called the king of the True Ancestors.
□Strigoi□
The characteristic of those magical organisms——was that they diffused magic power with their ultrasonic cries.
So Vlad's power is capable of reaching the level of the True Ancestors' king... was Nikaido Mari's blood of quality that high...?!
The flock of bats opened their mouths full of fangs at once and raised a high-pitched scream.
Waves fatal for those using magic reached her and majority of her magic power diffused.

Nhh, I can't use transfer magi——

"HAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAaAAAAaaAAaAaaAAAAAAaa!!"
Flapping her crimson wings.Ouka flew out from the horde of bats.
A stake-firing mechanism appeared on her elbow. Mother Goose immediately crossed her arms in order to protect her face.
——*bam*!
The stake that appeared at the elbow was released with explosive power.
It wasn't something that could be blocked with an arm.
Mother Goose's limbs were blown off and it had hit her face. Although she was a Sacred Treasure and wouldn't be destroyed with just this, there was a limit to maintaining the shape of a human.
Cracks appeared on her cheeks.
"Don't think it's over yet...!"
Thirst for blood sprouted from the blue eyes. From that moment, the domination of the 「Count's Fang」 had began.
The stake-launching mechanism appeared on both of Ouka's arms and legs, she matched the ejection of the stakes with her punches and kicks, starting a one-sided rush on Mother Goose. Not considering any recoil, she just continued to swing her destructive power, assaulting Mother.
This scene looked like a human being hit by seventy shells of a warship per second from a warship's cannon at zero distance. Compared to the previous time Ouka entered Vampire form, the power of stakes increased several times.
Ouka's crimson piles had rainbow colour mixed in them. That was the reason for the destructive power's improvement.
The "Night Blood" property mixed in with "Aurora" property. The "Count's Fang" produced by magic power specializing in penetration and magic power specializing in destruction was enough to corner even a Sacred Treasure.
An ordinary human wouldn't even leave dust behind hit by this power, but Mother Goose had just retreated.
——I won't let you run.
Ouka grasped Mother Goose's face with her hand and dove directly towards the ground.
And, just like that she had pounded her into the ground. Mother's body crushed the earth, forming a large crater.
Then, Ouka straddled Mother Goose and increased the rate of the stake's bursting even further.
As the ground on they courtyard continued to crumble, Ouka again and again fired her stakes.
Seeing Mother Goose all broken, Ouka swung her arm as if to say it will be the last blow.
Hundreds of magic circles appeared near her elbow forming a huge bombardment mechanism.
Concentrating all the magic on her right elbow, she intended to concentrate all of Vlad's firepower at one point. With this much magic power and a

complex operative procedure woven, this blow will make even Mother Goose lose her human form. The amount of magic power she'll lose will also be enormous.
"———"
Until the end, Mother Goose looked towards the sky calmly with her cracked-up pupils. The 「Strigoi」 who were flying around disappeared. In order to hit Mother with all her power, Ouka stopped maintaining the magical organisms for just this instant.
Mother's gaze returned to Ouka.
"——「Nosfe..."
Speaking the magic name, Ouka attempted to fire the crimson stake accompanied by the aurora magic power, at that moment,
——Mother Goose's and Ouka's figures suddenly disappeared from the academy's grounds.

□□□

Ouka stopped moving, remaining in the posture of swinging her right arm.
——What happened?
She had no idea. She couldn't hear anything, she couldn't see anything. The perfect silence and perfect darkness spread around her. All she felt, was indescribable lightheadedness.
No, that's wrong.
She could see them. Far away in the distance, there was a myriad of small lights.
They were stars.
Then, was this the night sky?
How beautiful.
The moment she thought that, she had realized she's unable to breathe.
She couldn't catch air. She couldn't breathe, couldn't speak up, couldn't make a sound.
That's not it. That definitely wasn't it.
This——there was no oxygen.
This was,
This place was, it can't be——!
「"Do you know what is the harshest environment for living beings?"」
Mother Goose's voice echoed directly in Ouka's head.

A figure shining in the darkness stroked Ouka's cheek as she struggled in the silent world.
While floating as if she was in water, Mother Goose said.
"——It's the space. Currently, you are two hundred million kilometres away from earth."
Mother grasped Ouka's shoulder and had her turn around.
Ahead of Ouka——there was a huge, reddish planet.
"We're relatively near the Mars."
Ouka realized that she was losing the oxygen in her body, as well as that in the vacuum there was no oxygen. The oxygen in her blood was disappearing quickly.
"——This isn't good! No matter how much of a vampire ye are, thou can't survive in this space...!"
Vlad shouted.
Although many times tougher than a human, vampires used the same fuel in their blood. Space, in where there's no oxygen was a hell even for a vampire.
She was careless. It was a mistake to have the Strigoi disappear in order to destroy Mother Goose with a single blow. In that moment Mother used transfer magic and of all places, moved instantly to the Mars.
Normally, it's not like the transfer magic doesn't take time to move objects and people. The body is temporarily converted into magic power and moved in form of particles. Since it required a huge amount of magic power in order to move particles of the body, the amount of magic power required is greater the further the transfer.
To move a distance of two hundred million kilometres in an instant, they must have travelled at speed close to speed of light.
The amount of magic power required for that was unimaginable.
Truly inexhaustible. The amount of magic power generated by Mother Goose... Gungnir, must have been immeasurable.
"Farewell, Ootori Ouka-san. I pray that we are able to meet again in the remade world."
Mother Goose's appearance disappeared like turning into fog-like particles.
Ouka was left alone in space, gasping in pain as she held her own neck.
At this... rate...!
Death was inevitable. Vlad desperately tried to protect Ouka with magic power, but there was no way of obtaining oxygen. The "Night Blood" property had no magic that could produce oxygen.
Her consciousness was fading. She could tell her brain was dying.
In the space without any living organisms, Ouka thought that she has to die in solitude and felt freezing from the loneliness.
Sorry.....every...one...
Her thinking was dying. She no longer even thought it's frustrating or sad.
Ouka's skin started to freeze over, and when she was almost exhausted to death in darkness.

——Something warm had grasped her hand.
When she opened her frozen-over eyelids and parched pupils, she saw a shadow.
A hat deeply on the shadow's head, a muffler trailing behind it in space.
Was it a hallucination? Or maybe revolving lantern?
This unbelievable sight made her doubt her own vision.
But, the warmth of that hand was certainly real——
"...good grief... you sure are troubling."
That voice was certainly Nikaido Mari's.
Ouka regained her fighting spirit. Strength returned to the left hand grasped by Mari and the stake on the right elbow had burned up with the with power that was supposed to have disappeared.
And.
And——!

□□□

Mother Goose who left Ouka behind, returned to their previous location.
She ended the combat without waste, but the amount of magic power she spent was outside her expectations.
Witch of Aurora, Nikaido Mari.
Vlad's contractor, Ootori Ouka.
Mother Goose didn't expect for them, with their human bodies to defy a weapon of God to that extent. It was shocking enough to deserve her praise and admiration..
The amount of magic she had to use to transfer to Mars was huge. However, she couldn't let those two obstruct the Mother's and Orochi's long-cherished wish.
She judged that unless she went that far, those two would definitely hinder her plan.
In order to rejoin Orochi, Mother Goose tried to turn around on spot.
"……?"
That's when she noticed. That she had used more magic power than she had thought.
Strange. I used two trips back and forth worth of magic.
Just when?
"……——It can't be!"
"Nosferatu...!"

Feeling vast magic power behind her, Mother Goose turned around.
Impossible, along with these words——after turning around, Mother Goose's chest was pierced.
The moment she turned around, an ultimate blow had pierced her chest and countless stakes have extended from her body.
The aftermath of the blow piercing her had blown away all the school facilities in the area at once, which was the result of its power.
As the magic power poured away from her body instead of blood, Mother Goose asked, her lips trembling.
"...just...how did you...use transfer magic...?"
The one she spoke to was Nikaido Mari, who was behind Ouka who had pierced her.
Mari, with her breathing faint, had responded while grovelling on the ground.
"Did you think...I wasn't interested in transfer magic devices while in Magic Academy...?"
"……!!"
"Even after coming back here, I continued to research it... like the operative procedures or suppressing magic consumption...lots of stuff."
Hearing that, Mother Goose shook her head thinking it's still impossible.
Mother Goose was the inventor of the transfer magic. She was the one who knew the best about transfer magic.
The reason Magic Academy required a large-scale apparatus, the reason it required a long time to fill it with magic, the reason why the instant charms were so valuable, was all because this magic had a bad fuel economy.
While it could be performed with small amount of magic power with "God's Authority" property, it wasn't so for other properties. Even if it was possible to use it, it was impossible for a single witch.
Even for "Aurora" property——moreover to traverse that distance——the distance of two hundred million kilometres was ridiculous!
And in half-dead state too!
"That's right... no matter how, it's impossible to use transfer magic with my power..."
Mari raised her middle finger of her right hand and drew a magic circle with the tip of her finger.
That moment, a small magic circle had emerged by Mother Goose's cheek.
"That's why——I have borrowed *your* magic power."
"...so it's a □Drain□'s magic circle after all...!"
As □Drain□'s name suggested, it absorbed the target's magic power. It was no need to think when was it engraved, the answer was clear.
Back then.
When Mari's arm and leg were blown off and she desperately punched Mother Goose.
It wasn't desperation, it was an attack that was ray of hope in middle of preparedness for death.

□Drain□ unlike Mistilteinn's □Twilight Enchantment□ could only absorb magic power only from a witch's body. Moreover, in order to absorb the magic from a witch, a magic circle had to be engraved on their body, so it's utility was limited.
It was mainly used for torture and using the prisoners as fuel.
The mass-produced Relic Eater, Guillotine's development was inspired by this magic.
"To not notice a magic circle engraved on you... that makes you a second-rate witch."
"....."
"Thanks to this magic I was connected with you, so I was able to find out the detailed coordinates... but I didn't think you'd go all the way to Mars."
Are you stupid? While laughing, Mari lied down on her back.
"It's some nasty magic... I don't really like using magic power of others..."
I mean, it hurts my pride, Mari added with a bitter smile.
Spitting out magic power from her mouth, Mother Goose quietly squinted.
"Using □Drain□ doesn't convert magic power into your own... just how difficult is it to use the magic power of others..."
Speaking up to that point, Mother Goose asked, wondering the extent of Mari's abilities.
After all, despite being on the death's door, ambition had returned to Mari's voice.
Not only she used "God's Authority" property to for transfer magic, but also activated □Rejuvenate□ magic at the same time. Mari's missing limbs were already recovered. Their treatment was very fast and the limbs were already regenerated to their previous state.
Both of those achievements were an ultra-high level magic... and the conclusion coming from these facts.
"Well, that's because, y'know——I'm first-rate, right?"
It wasn't arrogance nor bravado, saying that boldly as a mere fact, Mari winked.
Mother Goose had nothing else to say.
"Yes... you're right. I admit my defeat as a witch."
Although *her power as a witch was just a part of her,* as a self-proclaimed mother of the witches, she had self-depreciated her own lack of skill.
She quietly closed her eyes and leaked out magic power from her mouth.
At this rate her magic power would be depleted. If that happened, the true defeat awaited her.
No. The limit was already near.
The power leading her to Godhood was...
"However, my battle isn't over yet."
...she, had not the least intention of giving up here.
"It seems I no longer have time to spare. I cannot entertain you for any longer."
She faintly opened her eyes and looked up at the distant, rainy sky.

"Because Host... is calling me."
That's when Mother Goose made a little sad smile.
Mother Goose's body lost its shape, turned into magic power's particles and was blown away.
The particles flowed in the air, riding on the wind.
Ouka guessed that it wasn't death to her, but rather returning to her original form, and she tried to chase after Mother Goose in a hurry.
"This is bad! She intends to assist Kusanagi Orochi!"
It was when Ouka spread her wings in order to go to help Takeru.
"——There's no need to head over there. Rest assured, a helper had already rushed over there."
Retracting her spread wings, Ouka looked towards the source of the voice.
There was a group of people coming from the direction of the school gate, including Sage's and Yuzuho's members with wounds all over their bodies.
In front of that group, there was the ex-EXE member and currently the sub-leader of Heretic Alliance, Oonogi Kanata.
"I apologize for coming this late. We rescued refugee's on the way and..."
"Oonogi-san!"
Ouka rushed over seeing Kanata and Heretic Alliance's reinforcements.
There weren't too many of them, but Ouka knew the elite set of members.
Kanata placed a hand on Ouka's shoulder and looked at the academy with a rugged expression.
"The situation is worse than I thought... there was a shelter in the centre that had survived, but to think the headquarters would be lost to invasion..."
"The inquisitors directly under the headquarters' orders as well as EXE were wiped out. When we returned from the Critical Point they were already..."
"...since it seems like reinforcements would come from the branches in the province, although it's quite hard, this is the only time Heretic Alliance can move. We will focus on survival and rescuing people, as well as searching for Ootori Sougetsu. You guys——"
Ouka nodded before Kanata could finish.
"Subjugate Kusanagi Orochi and Mother Goose, right."
As she was about to rush over to help Takeru in high spirits, she was lightly hit in the forehead, stopping her.
"Your treatment comes first. I told you a helper went over there, right?"
Seeing Kanata's appalled, Ouka scratched her head in puzzlement.
"A helper...?"
Kanata answered Ouka's question.
"The opponent is Kusanagi Double-Edged style's instructor, knowing a little of it makes it easier to fare against it so... it isn't just Kusanagi-kun who knows Double-Edged style."
Someone else knowing Double-Edged style.
There was only one more person like that in existence.

Geirsögul (□□□□□□□) - The kanji it's written with is just "Spear" (□) and its be read as Geirsögul (author was slightly off with katakana pronunciation). In old Norse it means Old Norse "spear-sögul", it's a name of one of the Valkyries who is associated with spears.
Skeggjöld (□□□□□□□) - The kanji it's written with is just "Axe" (□) and its read as Skeggjöld (again, author's katakana was off, but okay). It's a name of one of the Valkyries, one of the translations says her name means "Axe-Age", she's a Valkyrie associated with axes.
Herja (□□□) - The kanji it's written with is just "Battle/War" (□) and its read as Herja. A name of another Valkyrie, translations say her name means literally "devastation", but she was also supposedly treated as a goddess of war.
Strigoi (□□□□□) - The kanji it's written with is "The Ones Dispersing With Screams" (□□□□□□) and read as Strigoi. It's a reference to a type of undead/vampire in Romanian mythology. Most likely the kanji name's meaning comes from the fact they disperse magic power with their screams.

Chapter 5 - Two Demons

The rustling rain continued to steal away warmth from his chilly body.
But although his body was cold, just his head alone was clear and burning up hot, possibly an evidence that he was reaching his limit.
Kusanagi Takeru looked through his wet bangs, his gaze locked on the enemy.
This was the academy's, Inquisition headquarters' deepest part.
It was the backyard of the school leading to the contraindicated area. Wet fallen leaves were spread all over the trackless road.
Kusanagi Orochi stood in open space in a forest of dead trees.
He must have been waiting, as he was turned in the direction Takeru was coming from.
Since it was cold, Orochi held his hands and steam could be seen as he breathed out. He continued to look at the dead trees around him.
"These trees, they're all Double Weeping Rosebud Cherries, huh... their blossoms absorb magic power. They planted them near the contraindicated area so that magic power does not leak out... or so it seems, damn inelegant."
"....."
"The blossoms shouldn't be used but admired."
Right? Asked Orochi.
Takeru didn't reply and just stopped moving approximately twenty metres away from Orochi.
It was the optimal distance for Double-Edged style.
Orochi looked at Takeru and made a carefree smile, like a boy.
"Were this to happen a little later, they'd be in full bloom, eh."
After saying that, Orochi squinted and slightly tilted his head with a smile.
".....you, you overused Soumatou haven't ya?"
Hearing the question, Takeru didn't even nod, just continued to glare.
"Dat's why I told ya to use it well. That significantly reduces your lifespan as a swordsman. If you overuse it, you won't be able to return to being human."
"...that's the kind of thing Double-Edged style is in the first place."
When Takeru said that, Orochi smiled showing his white teeth.
"You ain't wrong. To say, this is a higher level of Soumatou. When Soumatou is exceeding the limit, you can feel your mind being squeezed down, right?"
Takeru had experienced the mental state where he only pursued one desire when he fought against Hayato. It was as if he was being replaced by some different creature, as if he was losing his human heart, that kind of feeling.
"I arbitrarily named that 「Demon's Heart」."
Demon's... very much like Orochi, it was a nasty name for a technique.
As if describing Kusanagi itself.
"Well, after goin' that far there's no goin' back..."

Orochi pulled out his hand from his pocket, scratched his head and held the sword's hilt.
Then smiling he pulled it out and said to Takeru.
"Welcome——to the world of demons."
The withdrawn blade shone with pale light.
Although Orochi's sword was made for using as a sword-stick, but now it had a collar.
Takeru admired that sword which had a very thing blade with a small curvature which made it close to being a short sword.
——The treasured sword "Hotarumaru". It was a Magical Heritage categorized as C-class and did not have any persona. Its intrinsic performance was "Will never dull, will never break".
Contrary to its simple intrinsic performance, the blade itself was beautiful and its light were ephemeral.
When Takeru turned into an initiate, "give it to me" he asked Orochi, he could remember even now how he was refused with a single word. Although the performance was plain, a never breaking sword was first-rate for users of Double-Edged style.
But now he also had an unbreakable sword.
Takeru's dear sword, "Mistilteinn", a magic sword that could even kill God.
Still, he didn't act conceited because of that.
The opponent was his master, the ultimate instructor of the Double-Edged style.
The best of best, it could be said that as a swordsman, he was in a completely different dimension.
However——Takeru was the same. He held the same blood and the same inhuman power.
He should be able to prevail.
——That's how it must be!
"...here I come!"
Words were unnecessary. Kusanagis proved themselves with a sword.
The moment Hotarumaru's blade flashed dully, Takeru closed the distance between him and Orochi all at once.
The step-in, timing of sword draw, everything was perfect.
Double-Edged style's Heavenly Evil Spirit. A technique that allowed to reach top speeds in an instant
He entered under Orochi and drew the sword at zero distance, cutting through.
Cutting through——or so it should have been.
"……!!"
"……."
Takeru stopped moving in close contact with Orochi.
No, he was stopped.
On the brink of drawing, Orochi held down the sword's pommel, preventing Takeru from using his technique.

Paling, when he looked up at Orochi, he was responded with a cold stare.
Takeru leaped away in a hurry and kicking off the tree's trunk, he soared high into the air.
Double-Edged style's Mantis Slope. Using the distance from the ground and the user's weight as well as rotation, it was an excellent skill with a high destructive power.
He jumped and raised the sword high up, rotating his body forward.
But——when he tried to rotate, Orochi jumped just like Takeru and grasped his arm.
"——!"
"....."
Once again he was stopped before using it.
Once again their line of sight met in the air. Orochi was unchangingly cold.
Takeru held his sword only with the caught right arm and immediately grasped the sheath his left.
And he twisted his hips and back sliding his sheath to his back, and then released at once.
Double-Edged style's Single Wheel. It was originally an omni-directional sword drawing skill, but in emergency it could be used in this way as well.
This too, *was what he learned from Orochi.*
Taking advantage by the fact he was being held up, he smashed the sheath into Orochi's head.
But——that too, in the end, was easily stopped by Orochi's right arm.
"Khh!!"
Both of his hands were obstructed. Before Takeru realized, Orochi returned Hotarumaru to its sheath and dealt with Takeru's techniques with bare hands.
In desperation, Takeru kicked Orochi in mid-air.
Orochi sighed and used Takeru's kick as a scaffold, using his legs like a spring he nullified the kick and sprung up further into the air. Conversely, Takeru was blown away onto the ground.
Takeru should be the one who kicked, but for some reason he received an impact of a kick instead.
He reversed his body just before hitting the ground and landed awkwardly.
Orochi danced high in the air and slowly fell down.
——An opportunity. It would be one thing if Orochi could use magic, but he couldn't move mid-air.
Knowing the landing point, he should be able to aim at it at full power.
Takeru pulled half of his body backwards, entering a stance for thrust. He twisted the muscles in his body, bones like a spring to accumulate force in them.
And, charged aiming at the moment Orochi falls to the ground.
Kusanagi Double-Edged style's Unicorn's Destructive Lance. Twisting the entire body, the technique accumulated strength and upon releasing, resulted with a rotating thrust. It had the greatest penetrating power.

This time it's triggering wasn't stopped.
The sword's point headed straight for Orochi's landing point.
But, Takeru saw it. In slow-motion world, Orochi spun in the air like a top.
As Takeru's attack approached him, matching the rotation Orochi used his palm to hit Takeru's blade.
By delivering a powerful blow to the side of the sword's tip, he parried it behind himself.
Naturally, Takeru was unable to suppress the power of the thrust with his body and as a result of the parry he smashed into a cherry tree trunks. He finally stopped after mowing down three trees, he shook his head and piercing the ground with the blade he stood up.
Slowly, Orochi approached stepping on the wet, fallen leaves.
With an even colder look in his eyes than before, Orochi slowly put his hand on Hotarumaru's handle.
This is bad, Takeru thought and stood firmly holding his sword in front.
"First goes——Heavenly Evil Spirit."
As Orochi spoke, his blade glittered.
The next moment, the sword Takeru was poising let out a sound like a bell.
When he looked in the front, Orochi had already pulled out his sword.
A chill went down Takeru's spine.
*——*fuoonn**
The moment the sound had come late, so did the impact.
The cherry trees in the surroundings were mowed down.
Although he new it was coming and protected himself, Takeru was blown away just like the trees. By holding out his leg and scraping on the ground he somehow managed to stifle the momentum. The feeling in his arm has gone numb. As he felt the power transmitted through his bones up to his brain, Takeru's throat trembled.
"Sword-drawin' skills don't exert their maximum speed when the blade is pulled out, but right before the swing. It's pointless to hit yer opponent at zero distance."
"……uh……!"
"Next——Mantis Slope."
Saying that indifferently, Orochi left one leg behind him… no, he put his leg on the only cherry tree's trunk that was left behind.
He leaped up for Mantis Slope. If Orochi was going to attack from above, all Takeru had to do was to find where he's aiming and avoid.
Takeru made judgement instantly and triggered Soumatou, exerting himself to avoid.
Since it was a technique of falling, it was easy to avoid. One of the ways was to stop it before it's triggered, but Orochi was the opponent. It was best to avoid it with everything he had for the sake of being safe.
Orochi kicked off the trunk and——didn't leap upwards.
At the same time as he kicked the trunk he plunged rotating in forward direction.

The timing shifted and Takeru was unable to avoid, he could only protect himself awkwardly.
The power of Orochi's Mantis Slope delivered with all his strength caused Takeru's body to sink into the ground. Cracks appeared on the ground in the whole area and it vigorously rose up.
It was unknown if it can be said that he blocked it. The shock was transmitted to Takeru's entire body and he received damage. He spat blood and staggered.
It was the first time he received such blow.
"This technique can be only used for the first, surprise attack. If you leave it to free fall and power up with the rotation, if noticed, it can be easily avoided."
After landing on the ground Orochi put Hotarumaru on his shoulder.
"However, it's different when you can use the terrain. Up to the point where ya kicked the stern ya did right... but then, you jumped up like damn role model. If ya damn accelerated, just rush at yer enemy."
He told that to staggering Takeru and returned the blade to the sheath.
"And——Single Wheel."
Orochi slid the sheath on his waist and drew the sword all at once.
It was fast. But it wasn't too fast to avoid.
Takeru held his sword with his right hand and supporting his sword by pressing the back of the sword with his left, he blocked Orochi's Single Wheel.
The swords met, Orochi's attack stopped.
Single Wheel didn't have that much power. It was relatively easy to block it.
After all, this technique was——
"This technique is for using when you're surrounded by multiple enemies. There's no point in usin' it in one against one fight. That's why, if someone stops yer attack like ya did just now——"
"Ah...!"
"——It's Monk with Iron Mallet, dammit!!"
Orochi kicked stopped Hotarumaru's back with abandon.
Kusanagi Double-Edged style's Monk with Iron Mallet. It was a technique that powerfully pushed the sword forward when locking your sword with the enemy, but Takeru didn't know it could be used with a kick as well.
Once again blown away, Takeru rolled on the ground.
Orochi hit his shoulder with the sword's peak repeatedly and sighed deeply.
And facing downwards, he walked towards where Takeru rolled to.
"What the hell yer tryin'... Takeru... can't ya swing the damn sword unless I point out the basic stuff to you?"
".....ghh."
"That ain't it, right? It's not like that, eh? Did'ya notice? Don't tell me yer doin' it unconsciously."
Once he arrived by Takeru whose body was convulsing, Orochi's red ruby-like eyes peeked at him from behind his bangs.

"...who are ya fighting with now?"
"....."
"What are ya fightin' with?"
The dim sky was stained white with lightning.
Orochi's face was obscured with shadow and not visible. However, the red eyes could be seen staring at Takeru.
Questioned, Takeru realized he was holding himself back.
Not that he wasn't serious. He was thinking of what's ahead as he used all his strength to challenge Orochi.
Still... it could be said that there was some hesitation on his blade.
It seemed like Takeru was unable to properly recognize Orochi as an enemy.
...I know that... still...
When he tried to cut him, the memories of their training were revived.
Despite hating him to the bone and being almost killed so many times, back then he would always forgive Orochi. Although he has kicked Takeru off the cliff, kicked him into muddy streams, he was someone who always waited for Takeru him home with a meal prepared.
And whenever Takeru returned all beat-up, he said this with a smile.
"Oh, so yer alive."
Be emotionless? Discard emotions?
It was obviously impossible, Takeru owed him countless times.
This was the reason why there was hesitation in his techniques.
That's why Orochi——was furious.
Of course, it was natural.
To him, it was an insult.
"Did ya chase after me to spar 'n swordsmanship?"
No. He didn't come to learn.
Takeru bit his lower lip and shook his head.
"Or maybe ya've come to speak wit' me usin' a sword?"
That too, was wrong.
It was already impossible to talk even through the sword. Orochi's word gave off the feeling that he won't listen to anything from Takeru.
Orochi had no intention of talking.
Takeru once again, shook his head.
"Then... what did'ya come here for... Takeru."
Squinting, Orochi questioned him.
And Takeru,
"I...'ve..."
Takeru held his sword and stood on the ground muddy from the rain.
And from behind his wet bangs, he turns his tinged with sadness eyes towards Orochi.
As if to reject that sadness, Orochi stared at Takeru with his red pupils.
The answer was already decided.
"...nhh..."

Takeru closed his eyes for a moment, the memories of the past flashed in the back of his head.
His training days he spent together with Orochi in the mountains.
Those days were like hell. Every day was so painful he couldn't bear it. He learned Double-Edged style single-mindedly wanting to get stronger.
At the same time, he felt fulfilment back then. He steadily grew stronger, and he had an irreplaceable mentor who would prove it was so.
To him, when the only thing he had was swordsmanship... he from back then, could affirm that those were his happiest days in his life.
But——Takeru of now had many things much more precious than those memories.
There were lots of existences much more precious to him than his mentor.
He had a person he wanted to save no matter the sacrifice he had to make.
That's why——.
That's why———!
Takeru opened his eyes, discarded those memories——and poised his sword.
"I've come here——to cut you down."
With red, deeply red eyes of a demon, Takeru glared at Orochi.

Orochi raised his face and made a smile, looking happy from the bottom of his heart.
"Then... let's begin, Kusanagi Takeru."
The two demons confronted each other.
Orochi once again poised the sword he had on his shoulder. Takeru raised his sword up.
The two glared at each other, their blades shone.
And——Takeru and Orochi released Soumatou, allowing it to go berserk.
The moment a lightning ran down from the sky, raindrops stopped in mid-air.
There, was a beautiful world.
Every raindrop shone like jewel, lightning had meandered in the sky slowly and gracefully like a dragon.
This was the world seen by demons.
The world of the two.
In the unmoving world——the two demons collided.
" "Kusanagi Double-Edged style——Ghost Light Firefly!" "
Using the same technique at the same time, they sprinkled the droplets with their blades.
In super-high speed world, they performed a super-high speed sword dance.
Parrying opponent's attack and using the technique to turn it into their own power, they continued to accelerate endlessly by having the same abilities collide.
An instant of hesitation would probably destroy the balance and make one fall prey to the other's blade.
To the two, there was nothing as silly as hesitation or openings.
Kusanagi Double-Edged style's Demon's Heart. The two have become demons striving for just a single goal.
In the world of raging demons, the demons cut each other. That was all.
Cut. Cut him up.
That was all the two craved, their only desire, their earnest wish.
" "OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOHHHHHHHHH!!" "
In the soundless world, the two demons roared.
The blades didn't emit any sound, but spread sparks and their lightplay was reflected in the raindrops.
Orochi's prowess was overwhelmingly higher, Takeru's armour broke and his blood and meat mixed in among the raindrops. On the other hand, not a single attack of Takeru's reached the opponent. Orochi's mind was dyed with that of a demon and was no longer Takeru's mentor nor the leader of Valhalla.
It was appropriate to call him a Sword Demon.
Although he was overwhelmingly out-powered, Takeru felt comfortable. He felt euphoria of discarding everything for one purpose. To a man of Kusanagi who had the soul of a demon, this was the only way to be released from the cramped human body.

What happiness was it. Even though he would lose at this rate, he was so happy he couldn't bear it.
However, in order to cut his opponent up, he had to win.
He won't win unless he slices him up.
"Shape changes!"
Although his voice was unheard, he shouted to his partner.
In response, Lapis performed the change. On the verge of touching Hotarumaru, Mistilteinn's blade changed from a Nodachi to a Kodachi.
Orochi's swung blade missed and cut through the empty air, Takeru's Kodachi tore Orochi's meat.
Continuing, next was Shotel, Kukri, Oodachi, Zanbatou, Great Sword. By changing into various small and large shapes, they disturbed Orochi's rhythm and delivered their attacks.
They weren't picky with their means. Their goal was to cut enemy down.
It wasn't a fight of swordsmen. It was the fight of demons. They didn't care about good or bad means.
Orochi smiled in response to Takeru's offensive. And displaying his fangs he further increased his speed, using Ghost Light Firefly.
A Sword Demon wouldn't be taken down by something on the level of shape change. If there were changes of length and shape, he only had to assess them and match the flow.
There was no need to predict it.
He only needed to see through it.
See through, and cut.
That's what Soumatou was for.
Takeru's offensive ended immediately. Once again Orochi has become dominant.
But that wasn't a big deal. Although improving in an instant was impossible, it was possible to raise one's speed in an instant. If the opponent was more skilled, Takeru just had to deal with it by raising his speed.
If he increases his brain's operation rate he'll be able to see through any of opponent's skill.
Just like Orochi had dealt with shape change, Takeru could do the same against Orochi's skill.
See through, and cut.
That's right——
"Host!"
——That's when Takeru was startled hearing Lapis' voice.
Although he had Demon's Heart activated, he closed it up hearing Lapis speak.
Still, that was great help. Takeru was still able to return to normal. If he continued like that he might have been unable to return.
As if to end it with the last blow, Takeru released Unicorn's Destructive Lance.
On the other hand, Orochi swung down Yamata no Orochi.

Although he slipped by series of eight attacks and grazed Orochi, two of the eight attacks gouged Takeru's shoulder.
Blown away by the impact, the two made distance and——released Demon's Heart.
Immediately after they returned back to normal state by putting a lid on their brains, unspeakable headache assaulted them.
"Ghh...grgh...ow-ww...!"
While pointing his sword at Orochi, Takeru panted from the headache he felt. It felt as if a bullet continued to ricochet inside his skull.
He looked at himself and saw blood flowing from all the pores in his body. The blood didn't stop flowing even from his eyes and nose.
"I'll perform treatment on your body... so please back off for now...!"
"...s-so..rr-y...!"
Both apologizing and thanking Lapis, he looked at Orochi with his barely-functioning eyes.
Takeru was clearly outmatched. He received far more damage.
But, Orochi too, was suffering. His face was pale, there was clearly blood mixed in with sweat. Even though he had transplanted vampire cells and had the same physical abilities as a Dhampir, the structure of his brain didn't change.
In the end, his brain was in the same state as Takeru's.
No, still... probably, *that wasn't all.*
There was one thing Takeru noticed as they fought. The damage Orochi dealt to him and he dealt to Orochi exhausted something else other than Demon's Heart.
He had no idea what was it, but something abnormal was happening to Orochi's body.
"Haa... we're both...too greedy...! Once we turn into demons, we forget completely about efficiency."
"...khh!"
"But——!"
Smiling, Orochi forced his convulsing body to move.
He entered a sword-drawing stance. His cells were momentarily healed thanks to vampire cells.
"!! Our regeneration speed is inferior! Intercept!"
Just as he was told, Takeru tried to raise his sword, but with his entire body trembling all he could do was to hold the sword.
At this rate I'm done for.
The moment he thought so,
"Double-Edged style——Mantis Slope!"
Receiving a surprise attack from above, Orochi grit his back teeth.
In order to change the sword's trajectory, he reversed the sword in the sheath pointing upwards and used the sword-drawing technique in reverse grip.
A high-speed sword-draw aimed upwards.

Hotarumaru's blade met with the surprise attacker's sword.
Upon clashing, the surprise attacker's sword spouted flames.
A blue-haired girl appeared from among the flames.
"Diluted, huh...!"
Making a smile, Orochi finished swinging his sword.
Pushed away with a sword, the surprise attacker leaped and landed beside Takeru.
"Kanaria...?!"
"....."
Without looking at Takeru, Kanaria poised Lævateinn and didn't remove her gaze from Orochi.
Orochi's face distorted painfully and he snorted.
"...which means the Heretic Alliance bunch's come at full force, huh...shucks...and we haven't found that Sougetsu bastard yet..."
Still holding Hotarumaru in reverse grip, Orochi looked at Kanaria.
"...what did'ya come for. This is Kusanagis' fight. Don't get involved."
"....."
"Ya met yer mother right... can see it in face. Ya've reached yer goal."
"....."
"Get lost."
Don't get involved. Being told so, Kanaria faced down a little sadly.
She was ignored. Orochi's attitude must have been that painful.
Disregarding Takeru who somehow managed to keep standing with his sword pierced into the ground, she took a step forward.
"Until, Takeru recovers, Kana will take Orochi on..."
When Takeru tried to stop her, Kanaria said so.
"Wait...!! Think who's the opponent...! You can't——!
"——Kana's from Double-Edged style too!"
Turned with her back to Takeru, her shoulders trembling, she interrupted him.
She grasped his hand he extended to stop her.
"Kana isn't Kusanagi but... is from Double-Edged style...!"
She cleaved with her sword and was clad in flames.
Inside Takeru, the feelings of wanting to stop her and of wanting to let her go fought each other.
Kanaria was aware that her skill was inferior to that of Takeru's. She was also aware that she's no opponent for Orochi. But even though she knew that, she was hoping to speak with Orochi through the sword.
She didn't inherit Kusanagi blood.
But unmistakably, she was a member of Double-Edged style. Just like Takeru she studied Double-Edged style under Orochi.
She didn't come here because she was Kusanagi.
But because she was from Double-Edged style.
In other words, unlike Takeru and Orochi, she came to *speak with the sword.*

To ask a question with her sword.
Holding Lævateinn in correct posture, she confronted Orochi.
"Kusanagi Double-Edged style certified... Kanaria."
"....."
"Please... take care of me."
Hearing polite speech from Kanaria's mouth for the first time, Orochi was slightly taken aback and laughter leaked out from his mouth.
It absolutely wasn't that he made fun of her nor made light of her feelings.
In this last moment, on this scene of carnage, in this crucial stage, his dear disciple acted selfishly complicating things for him.
Her acting as a Double-Edged style member reminded him of his human self slightly.
Orochi suppressed himself as a demon and made a kind, wry smile.
"...geez...there's no helpin' you, really."
Seeing Orochi hold the sword in reverse grip, Kanaria held her breath.
To fight fair and square, she pointed her blade at her teacher.
".....——I'm going!"
"Come."
Said Orochi, spreading his arms as if to welcome his child.

□□□

There were two people watching the fight in the space between school and the contraindicated facility from a long distance.
They were Usagi and Ikaruga.
In the Seelie's building at the window overlooking the forest, Usagi held the sniper rifle prepared.
After watching the inhuman fight between Takeru and Orochi through the scope, now she was monitoring Kanaria's battle.
"...if you're doing it, it should be now..."
"....."
Hearing Ikaruga, Usagi's pride shook.
Although she had seen high-speed battles since all this started, it was something she couldn't keep up with her eyes, and it was impossible to predict ahead and land a hit.
She had only one chance to snipe. If she misses, Orochi will immediately find Usagi's position and come to deal with her accordingly. If that happens, there were no chances of victory.

Still, Orochi's speed was normal now... that said, he still was using Soumatou for high-speed combat, but miraculously Usagi was able to see a shadow of his movement trajectory's.
It wasn't as fast as not to allow her to predict the movement patterns. For Usagi, who continued to cover Takeru so far, this was speed she was familiar with.
If she aims for the moment he stops, with Usagi's skill she should be able to bring him down.
She aimed for his right leg. During combat, Orochi made some unnatural moves. Usagi didn't notice it in ultra-high speed combat, but now during the combat with Kanaria it stood out.
Either his right leg hurt or he was suffering from some kind of illness. There was something about his right leg that was impossible to heal even with a vampire cells' transplantation.
However...
"....."
Was it all right to hinder them here, Usagi wondered hesitantly.

Kanaria challenged her master as a member of Double-Edged style. She wished a fight between a master and disciple. Wished to speak with him through sword.
Orochi accepted that too. It was different from when he turned into a demon and wouldn't respond to Takeru's questions, investing himself in the battle completely. He faced Kanaria as her mentor.
It was a fact that Kanaria would despise her for interfering.
She would be cursed and told off.
"....."
However——resolved, Usagi put a finger on the trigger.
She resolved decided to hinder them.
This battle wasn't a fair and square match.
——It was war.
Both the enemies and the allies did fought using any means available to achieve their desires.
Therefore, Usagi didn't intend to be picky with her means for the sake of the one she wanted to protect.
She had no intention of apologizing. It didn't matter that she will be despised as cowardly.
This was Saionji Usagi's war.
"...I shall definitely protect him."
She muttered quietly and matched her sniping with enemy's movement.
The loaded bullet was a Spirit Silver bullet generated by Ikaruga's "Nanomachines". Spirit Silver was a substance that was a natural enemy for

the vampires. Although the Dhampirs weren't susceptible to daylight or crosses, they have inherited their weakness against Spirit Silver. Although it would be difficult to kill him with it since he's half-human, by aiming at his leg it was possible to make him impossible to continue combat.
Kanaria was blown away by Orochi's slash and fell on her butt.
Orochi stopped his movement and thrust his blade at Kanaria.
He probably didn't intend to kill her. His expression was gentle, he was waiting for Kanaria to say "I lost". It wasn't the face of a demon, but of a teacher.

"————Firing."

Usagi mercilessly aimed her shot at that gentleness.

□□□

Takeru was the only one who saw the silver bullet pierce Orochi's leg.
He was surprised, but he immediately realized it was Usagi's doing.
"Ghh...! .....!!"
Orochi pierced the ground with his sword to support his body, he made an expression of agony.
Takeru too, had noticed the disorder in Orochi's right leg. The Spirit Silver bullet had precisely aimed in there. Cracks appeared on the spot the bullet landed and the wound turned into ash.
His right leg was not just unable to move, but would break off soon enough.
Seeing this completely merciless shot, Takeru grit his teeth.
"...well done, Usagi..."
After saying that to intercom, Takeru stood firmly on his legs and looked at Kanaria.
She stared at this sudden happening, but then her pupils shook in chagrin once she had come to realization.
"...I get it...Kana understands..."
This thin and trembling voice caused Takeru's chest to tighten.
But Usagi was correct. She did work as Takeru expected of her.

She covered them as best as she could.
And,
For the third time——Takeru confronted Orochi.
"...haa, your comrades are quite something."
Twisting his mouth in a smile, Orochi said that with a serious expression.
It wasn't sarcasm, but a honest praise.
"Yeah. I trust them."
After responding without hesitation, Takeru raised his sword.
That's when countless presences approached from outside the cherry tree forest. There were both human footsteps and those of Dragoon's.
It seemed like Orochi had noticed they were reinforcements from Heretic Alliance.
The members of the Heretic Alliance who rushed over have all turned their muzzles at Orochi.
At the same time, there was a muzzle flash in the distance at the partially-destroyed tower with sealed Magical Heritages. Most likely, it was Oonogi Kanata aiming at Orochi.
Furthermore, Ouka and Mari had approached Takeru from behind.
"...Takeru!"
"Great! Are you all right?!"
Takeru didn't respond to the two.
He continued pointing the sword in Orochi's direction.
"Everyone, we're in mid-combat."
He mercilessly instructed his comrades.
Mari and Ouka were surprised for a moment hearing Takeru's ghastly voice, but then realized what he felt.
Mari expanded magic circles. Ouka turned Vlad's muzzles at Orochi.
Completely surrounded, supporting himself on the sword pierced through the ground, Orochi looked up to the sky and sighed.
"...dis's bad. I'm driven into a corner... first time experience."
Orochi spoke sarcastically.
Takeru and the Heretic Alliance did not intend to tell him to surrender not intended to capture him.
Even Orochi knew that.
He smiled seeing his own leg turn to ashes.
"I sucked 'dat much blood to get myself refreshed and this is how it ends... work to turn a human into a God sure is deep."
"....."
"But——I don't intend to end it here."
Once again, Orochi's pupils were stained with colour of a demon.
Takeru too, activated Demon's Heart in the same way.
That's when Orochi discarded Hotarumaru with a furious expression.
"I'll become a God and get Mikoto back! Ya can do whatever you want with the world! We can't let them stop us——right?! Gungnir!"

The moment he said that name, Mother Goose appeared behind him along with a pure white magic circle.
"Yes. It's as you say——my Host."
The atmosphere in the location changed completely. Heretic Alliance's members' sense of urgency reached the climax.
The pure white magic circle shone brilliantly and Mother Goose's body disappeared, turning into particles of magic power.
In that moment, the scenery of the surrounding area changed.
Cherry trees toppled during the battle have flowered in an instant, entering full bloom. Also the vegetation other than the cherry trees also had become verdant.
The space with the cherry trees cleared up in a moment and the evening light poured down.
It was as if life was going berserk. Although he had no idea what characteristics did Gungnir have, he understood that it was on the level of overturning the world.
Standing in the centre of the magic circle, Orochi clenched his teeth, his hair ruffled.
The Sacred Treasure Gungnir and Kusanagi Orochi who held the soul of a demon.
There was no one who knew what will happen with those two together.
However, as for who was capable of standing on the level of the two——they knew that much.
"...change of orders. Everyone, retreat from here."
The man clad in azure armour took a step forward, turned to everyone with his back.
Ouka and Mari looked at each other and tried to call out towards Takeru's back.
But, they couldn't.
They knew that he was the only existence capable of competing with those two.
They couldn't stop him. They could only leave it to him.
Feeling themselves to be miserable because of that, they have seen him off.
——Come back to us.
Even without their voice, their feelings were relayed to him.
Takeru clenched his fist and lightly raised his right arm.
That was his answer.
Walking slowly, Takeru sought power from Lapis.
After a moment of silence, Lapis responded to his wish.
A magic circle appeared beneath his feet and changing from azure, it was stained with colours of twilight.
He could tell Ouka and Mari moved away along with the Heretic Alliance.
Feeling a little lonely, Takeru challenged the final battle.
As Takeru approached——Orochi made a slightly mean smile.
"You, ain't ya quite popular."

Takeru was taken aback seeing Orochi crack a joke at this moment.
However, this was the last time.
It didn't feel too bad to have a human conversation at the end.
The topic was quite cheap and much like Orochi, but amusing.
"I've got no clue but... what about Master?"
When he asked in return with a wry smile, Orochi made a vulgar smile.
"Ah, ya don't even know how!"
"Liar. There wasn't a single woman who'd visit the house."
"Ooo-oh, sinful men sure know how to speak. Makes me envious of yer leeway. Old man'd like you shared with him."
"Don't call yourself an old man with that appearance... makes me feel old. To say, we're so similar it's disgusting."
"So are ya' sayin' that yer own face is disgustin'?"
"Bastard..."
His master always had a comeback.
In the dusk forest full of dancing cherry blossom, the two had their last chat.
After letting out a cackling laughter, Orochi squinted and looked at Takeru enviously.
"...well, it's good to have a woman waiting for ya."
Takeru didn't deny that.
Rather than a woman waiting for him, there were comrades who fought together with him. He was able to stand here like this thanks to his comrades.
"——But unfortunately, yer' never goin' to return to those girls."
Those words put an end to the chat between the mentor and the disciple.
Brought back to reality, Takeru had the demon dwell in his chest.
"——That's my line. You'll never going to reunite with Mikoto-san."
Clashing the feelings they can't yield to anyone, they poised their swords.
Takeru's azure blade was clad in twilight flames.
Orochi had a pure white sword clad in white flames appear in his hands.
"Takeru... one blow. Look well before you die. I'll show ya Double-Edged style's secret art."
"....."
"Since you have Demon's Heart, you should know the way to do it. If you want to overcome it, you better challenge me with the same technique."
Orochi had his white sword take shape of a broadsword and lowered it.
Takeru had returned the azure blade into the sheath and took a stance for sword-drawing technique.
And——asked his partner, with whom they trust each other, for power.

"I am Herjann. I am Uzr. I am Alfozr. I am Vizurr and therefore——"

"Starke Scheite schichtet mir dort am Rande des Rheins zuhauf Hoch und hell lodre die Glut——"

"——I become the avatar of furious Odin."
"——Die den edlen Leib des hehrsten Gott verzehrt."

The two's bodies were wrapped with armour from toes up to the top of their heads.
When magic circles shattered, reigning in there was a God Hunter and——a God himself.
Deification
It was power changing the user into an existence equal to that of a god. A god of a parallel world… that power was unimaginable, it allowed to bend the laws of the world, revive dead people, returning decaying tree's into lush ones, it even allowed one to create new life and transcend time.
However, Orochi was currently incomplete. The time when this power would shine, would be after killing Ootori Sougetsu.
There was only one more time that Orochi's body could withstand this power.
Orochi was sure that once he gets over this fight, he'll challenge Sougetsu and will obtain the right to become a God.
However, standing against him were Takeru and Lapis holding the power of God Hunter form.
It was the power for killing God. To Orochi as he was now, it was the worst power to confront.
Takeru didn't know what was the power of Gungnir's Deification, but he was sure that he was able to kill Orochi with his power.
To speak the truth——there wasn't much difference between the two's raw power.
God's power and the power capable of killing God.
Confronting themselves, they were in fact the same.
If there was a difference——it was in the user's abilities.
Takeru and Orochi opened their eyes wide inside the helmets and released their heretic powers.
Double-Edged style——Demon's Heart.
They discarded emotions, ate their own hearts and squeezed out their desires.
Speed.
They only sought speed.

The dancing cherry blossoms stopped in the air. The particles of sunlight passing through the foliage had poured down sparkling.
They could see the movement of light.
Inside this beautiful world, the two were only ones moving.
However, they didn't make their moves.
It wasn't enough. Faster, even faster.
Orochi and Takeru dreamed, pursuing the fantasy.
They left behind.
Anything and everything, wind, sound——in order to reach the light!
I can't see it. I can't see it yet. More——more!
"Double-Edged style's secret art——"
The one who moved first was Orochi.
He was at the demon's limit. Pursuing the light he can't catch up to, he approached the world of speed of light as much as possible. Orochi rushed inside the slowly-moving particles of light.
"——Ama no Habakiri."
Takeru could see Orochi move as well.
However——Takeru didn't move yet.
No, he couldn't move. It was because he could still go on.
The technique allowing one to step into the area humans should not step into was called Soumatou.
The technique allowing one to walk into the area demons should not enter was called Demon's Heart.
Then, what's ahead? What is there ahead of here?
It can be only light, right.
A world even a demon could only approach but never catch up to.
Takeru understood what was required in order to get there.
Shut your eyes——shut down sound——shut down smell——shut down pain too.
And, when he shut down even his heart and soul——he finally touched it with his hand.

Yeah, so it can be reached after all.

The moment he learned that truth, Takeru opened his eyes.
"————"
In front of him, Orochi who was about to swing his sword had solidified like stone.
He stopped.
The sub-light speed slash had stopped.
It was quiet. Nothing could be felt. There was no warmth nor dazzle of the light.
That was because Takeru, was right now light itself.
Unconscious, he pulled out the sword from the sheath at his waist.
And, he spoke the technique name he shouldn't have known.
"Double-Edged style's secret art.....Snake-Slayer of Takamagahara."
He didn't feel the sensation of cutting. He didn't have the awareness of cutting something.
To Takeru only the phenomenon of cutting had existed in the speed of light's world.
The speed dropped by a single stage and Orochi's body started to move.
At the same time, Takeru's helmet shattered and his consciousness as a demon returned.
The soul of a demon who embraced nothing but speed had returned.
And yet——
——The moment Takeru cut Orochi, a single line of tears had spilled from his eyes.

□□□

Swinging the sword, Orochi stood under the twilight sky.
The world drenched in light with cherry petals dancing in it was beautiful enough to forget his heart as a demon.
A hundred and fifty years ago was the same. Back then, the sky had the same twilight appearance.
"...beautiful, isn't it."
"...Yes."
Mother Goose agreed with Orochi.
Their voices were calm.
"This is as far as we go."
"It's our loss, isn't it."
Orochi made a light smile and squinted.
"Gungnir..."
"Yes."
"...I've been in your care."
"...likewise. Since I have remaining work I need to do, I shall join you later."
"Sure."
The sword fell from Orochi's hands.
Leaving Orochi's hands the sword fell so slowly it looked practically unmoving.
Orochi exhaled lightly and then his life so far had crossed his mind at high speed.
I see, this isn't Soumatou, but what'cha call revolving lantern...
Bullshit, he made a bitter smile and entrusted himself to the memories.
His childhood as a wild kid, meeting with Mikoto, war, every day life in battles... the memory of the moment when he killed Mikoto... idly spent 150 years... meeting with Takeru, their farewell... the days spent training with Kanaria...
After he finished watching those memories, unexpectedly something warm touched his back.
He felt someone standing back to back with him.
It wasn't Takeru.
It was a woman with body much smaller and more delicate.

——It's all right now, right?

That woman's nostalgic voice spoke as if patting him gently.
Having his human heart released, he trembled in relief.

Orochi faced the heavens and while looking at the twilight sky, he replied while breathing out.

"Yeah...I'm satisfied...Mikoto."

After saying that in cheerful voice, Orochi closed his eyes relaxed.
The moment world had began to move normally, Orochi's chest was torn apart by the energy of Takeru's light-speed slash and he was swallowed by the impact.

Snake-Slayer of Takamagahara (□□□□) – It's the same Ama no Habakiri technique Orochi had used. However, so far in the novel it was written purely with katakana (□□□□□□□). It was written with kanji for the first time when Takeru used it. In Japanese mythology it was the sword wielded by Susanoo and used to slay Orochi.

Epilogue

Once the unimaginable shockwave was gone, Ouka ran over the school's grounds which had become a nearly vacant space.

Although she shouldn't have moved away from Takeru in order to release his God Hunter form, but she was blown away by the overly-large shockwave from his secret technique.

"Vlad! What happened to Takeru?!"

"Wait... I'll search by smell."

After waiting impatiently for about five seconds, Vlad reported the result.

"——He's alive and safe. It seems like there's no after-effects of the God Hunter form. He's conscious too."

"...I see!"

Relieved from the bottom of her heart, Ouka rushed towards where Takeru was.

□□□

After cutting Orochi, Takeru fell on his knees and rested his body.

It was really strange that he was safe. Even his headache was suddenly gone.

Takeru exhaled and when he tried to stand up, he realized his body was all ragged-up. It was beyond what could be called wounds, there was no place on his body that wasn't wounded.

There was no pain even though he received this much damage.

Most likely, his sense of pain was dead.

"I see... no wonder my headache's gone..."

"....."

"You don't have to worry about it. It was necessary. Both Demon's Knowledge and God Hunter form. Also, I know that you did everything you can in order to release God Hunter."

".....Host..."

"If not for your voice, I'd go beyond the point of return."

There was no need for her to concern herself.

He was the one who decided to use it. The responsibility lied with him.

He too, had to turn his attention elsewhere.

Because the fight wasn't over yet.

It was no time for feels after killing Orochi. If he slumps right now, Orochi would be furious.

"So I caused this destruction... are Ouka and the others safe?"

"Yes. It seems like they're safe. Since you have launched a light-speed attack, normally the damage wouldn't have settled with just this. It seems like... Gungnir's enchantment's effect absorbs any kind of energy."

It must have been a higher level of 「Twilight Enchantment」 and 「Ragnarøkkr Enchantment」 or similar, huh. Since it absorbed any kind of energy, it was strange for that attack to have gone through.
「"It must have had the same condition of having the energy touch the blade... because Host's slash was faster, the effect of their enchantment wasn't demonstrated fully."」
"....."
「"...I have confirmed that after we cut Kusanagi Orochi, Gungnir's blade had sucked-in the majority of explosion's energy. The amount absorbed went over the limit and after losing the Host, Gungnir's whereabouts are... unknown."」
Although Takeru didn't understand the explanation too well, apparently in the end, Mother Goose had protected his comrades.
He didn't know what was the true reason for her protecting his comrades after her defeat, but he could only thank her.
Takeru stood up with his beat-up body.
"...let's rejoin Heretic Alliance then find Kiseki and Chairman."
「"About that... don't you think it's strange? That Ootori Sougetsu still hasn't had Hyakki Yakou enter combat. Valhalla had invaded this deeply and yet..."」
Told so, he thought it certainly was strange.
Even though Sougetsu's objective was to be killed by Takeru, it was incomprehensible for him not to use Hyakki Yakou.
As Takeru thought it was suspicious, there.
"Takeru!"
Hearing a familiar voice, he turned around.
He could see Ouka run towards him alone.
Takeru who maintained Witch Hunter form for the sake of recovery was relieved that Ouka was safe and ran towards her.
And, the moment they were about to reach each other——

——A pillar of red meat had suddenly protruded from the ground.

Hindered by the red meat, Ouka and Takeru stopped moving.
"...Ouka!"
Although he called her name, there was no answer. He noticed that red meat had grew from the ground as to surround him.
The mass of red meat had piled up like a mountain in an instant.
And on top of it——there was a white figure.
A figure dear to him.
".....Kiseki.....!"
Calling the figure's name, he faced it with sword in one hand.

He faced his little sister, Kiseki.
Kiseki stared at her brother coldly.
Takeru resolved his faltering heart and returned Kiseki a glare.
——We finally meet, finally.
"Yo... aren't you quite late."
He said that to her as if it they have scheduled to meet up.
"Just as I declared... I'm here. Let's begin our sibling fight, eh?"
On top of the undulating meat, Kiseki overlooked Takeru with unchanging expression.
Takeru knew she was angry. He provoked her on purpose too.
It was a fight where they clash their feelings against one another. Just like Mari said, he'll save Kiseki even if he has to force her.
His resolve hardened.
However——at the same time, Kiseki's will hardened as well.
"Kiseki too... did as she declared..."
Hearing these words, Takeru didn't understand too well.
Declared... what did Kiseki said she would do?
Recalling that, he had a bad feeling.
A chill had gradually rose up his spine.
What did Kiseki said she'll do?

"——First, I'll kill all the people in the world."

He recalled it. That's certainly what Kiseki said.
Takeru's fearless smile froze and changed into speechlessness.
The wall of meat has disappeared and on the other side of the school there was the scenery of the destroyed city.
Since the academy was on top of a hill, it was possible to overlook the city.
The scenery seen there had,
Far surpassed Takeru's imagination.
"...Kiseki wondered what does she have to do to kill all humans in the world..."
"....."
"After thinking a lot, this was the answer."
Kiseki's cold expression thawed and she made a peaceful smile.
"Look, Onii-chan."
She pointed at the city.
There——overflowing from the underground was a sea of red meat swallowing up everything, not only in the city but it also had spread to the other side of horizon.
His expression stretched, he looked at Kiseki once again.
Kiseki smiled mischievously and turned her squinting eyes full of murderous intent at Takeru.

"You see, first——Kiseki thought of making this planet hers."

The reason why Kiseki didn't appear on the battlefield until now.
It was because she dove deep under the ground,

——In order to devour this planet itself.

□□□

Ever since Orochi's army had attacked the city from the north and carried out the slaughter, in the densely-populated residential area south of the city——
"....."
A man with blonde hair shining even in the darkness had brought a young girl's face in front of his and faced her.
The girl had a relieved smile.
The blonde man too, had faced the girl with a similarly calm smile.
"Ehe."
He looked incredibly happy.
Placing his hand on the girl's cheeks, he made a smiley, smiley, smiley, smiley smiley smiley smiileey expression.
Beside him, a woman whose soul had left her body was lying on the ground, incontinent.
What she's been looking at, was the girl the blonde man was facing.
The girl's head, as she had nothing below.
The young girl who smiled despite being only a head.
Countless human corpses were lying in the man's surroundings. The only ones alive were the man and the woman lying on the ground.
The woman was the girl's mother. When the war had began and they tried to leave the city, this slaughter had happened in the residential area. The woman lost her sight of her daughter and went around looking for her desperately in middle of the massacre.
When she finally found her, the daughter was together with a gentle-looking man.

Surely, he protected the lost girl and looked for her mother together.
Thinking so, the woman rushed happily in order to hug her daughter, and then the man suddenly cut off the girl's head.
plap, with such a comical sound rather than brutal sound, the human head was ripped off.
The woman surely, even now was thinking it was a bad dream.
Thinking of that, the blonde man——Haunted was fulfilled.
And, as he was excited about such modest despair, there was a much more outrageous explosion on a distant hill.
Astonished, Haunted looked towards the explosion.
The moment he noticed it was at the location of AntiMagic Academy, his smile stiffened.
"...mm? ...eh? ——E-eh?! Can it be, possibly that.... I'm..."
He started to overflow with sweat and his body trembled.
His beloved sword Dáinsleif, Nacht had imperceptibly appeared beside him and squinting, she looked at the explosion in the same way.
And,
"Completely late indeed."
"N-NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!"
Haunted placed the girl's head on top of the soulless woman's knees, fell on his knees and holding his head, he screamed towards the sky.
"N-n...now I've done it... haven't I?!!"
"...no, it's your own fault for saying slaughter isn't your speciality and making the city residents' despair one by one, y'know?"
Having that pointed out by Nacht, crying like it was a joke, Haunted raised his head.
"B-but, but...!"
"Don't 'but' me, are you a kid?"
"Isn't killing people in the city just like that, rude?! They lived with all they had! They lived without discarding hope in this hopeless world! Simplistic killing like that of Orochi-kun's and Mother's is too much, right?! It's the life's finale you know?!"
"...no, yeah, well, I kind of get it, but I don't."
As Nacht returned that coldly, Haunted began to cry holding his knees in the middle of the road.
In fact, he had lots of plans. The massacre was an appetizer, and since it would be no good to fulfil himself completely he would remain in the back, then once Kusanagi Takeru's and Orochi combat began he'd do something as they bond themselves as mentor and student. Then Kiseki-chan would appear in front of disheartened Takeru, Haunted would watch the dangerous scenes, and once they regain their bonds as siblings and despite that they still have to continue fighting, he'd do something again.
"And then the main dish was supposed to comeeeee... served with secret ingredient Mari-sannnnn...."
"What 'served', you..."
Then, Haunted remained completely stunned.

Nacht heaved a sigh, I've had enough of this contractor... when she was about to say that, her searching capability reacted.
There was a reaction below. The reacting area was vast.
Staring at the ground, Nacht poked Haunted's shoulder with a finger.
"It seems like it's not over yet?"
"Fuee?"
Haunted momentarily raised his pathetically-looking face.
Pillars of meat had protruded all over the city.
Forming something that looked like a red forest, the meat stretched thick trunks into the sky.
An apocalyptic sight had swallowed the city in a blink of an eye. Red meat was also ejected where Haunted was and a wave of meat surged on the road.
——Haunted stood agape at the appearance of Hyakki Yakou, but he immediately had tensed his expression.
He fixed the collar of his priest's clothing, he washed off the blood with magic, fluttered his long skirt and made a loud sound with his boots.
Then, with a strong gait he began to walk towards the wave of red meat.
"Nacht, is Kusanagi Takeru alive?"
"Yep. He defeated Orochi and somehow survived."
"And M-MM-Mari-san?"
"..... She's alive."
"Great...! That's how it must be!"
Shine returned to his eyes and he expanded a magic circle.
"I've eaten a bit too much of the appetizer, but my hunger still hasn't been satisfied."
"...no point acting cool now. Wipe your nose."
While saying so, Nacht stopped using her human form and changed into particles of magic power, becoming a sword held in Haunted's right hand.
Haunted sniffled, slurping back mucus to his nose.
He squinted sharply and raised Dáinsleif like a knight in front of the approaching threat of red meat.
"Kusanagi Takeru and Kusanagi Kiseki's main body are in the school. It's quite far."
"Hmm. There isn't much time... but don't fret. Whaat, it's an old saying y'know."
Then, Haunted swung his sword and started running.

"——Hero* always comes late!"

Nacht thought deep in her heart.
What the hell is this guy talking about... that is.

*Note: Where Haunted says "Hero" the kanji used says "Despair".

Afterword

Sougetsu: "God, now."

And so, I hope you enjoyed the eleventh volume.
It's has been a while. Yanagimi Touki here.
AntiMagic Academy surpassed double digits and the story reaches the climax. It's all thanks to you all, who have been with it.
Honestly speaking, as the author myself I didn't assume it would be continued for so long, in all this confusion, all happy I acted as I pleased.
Well well, they sure grew strong, that Small Fry Platoon. They've grown way too strong, can't you guys destroy the world by yourself now? I end up thinking.
The days where they were busy trying to earn points are nostalgic.
Since there's a great occasion, let's talk in the afterword about AntiMagic Academy's creation's secret stories, or rather, write something about the background. I mean, afterword this time is quite long.

Creation's Secret Story 1: "At first it wasn't about a school nor there were about platoons."
Suddenly speaking frank. I wonder if it can be said speaking frankly.
I think it's fine.
In the early plot school did not exist, the world it was set in was a complete fantasy world too. The title wasn't "AntiMagic Academy "The 35th Test Platoon" " but plain thing named "Treasured Sword Management Station".
It was management of Magical Heritages existing in present work and a story of the organization sealing them.
The witches have perished and the only thing related to magic remaining are Magical Heritages... that was the setting.
There was no platoon. There was the protagonist and two novice management clerk heroines. I think it felt like something similar to a police drama.
This is way too plain, it seemed and so, it turned out as it is now.
To say one more thing, this story was rejected before my previous work "Re: Can an idiot save the world?". A prototype from a long ago.

Creation's Secret Story 2: "Kurogane Hayato was the protagonist."
He was. At first.

Well, rather than Hayato alone,
It felt like a character made out of both Hayato and Sougetsu.
Hayato and Sougetsu, what on earth was he... that guy...
How should I explain this. Cool and honest, sarcastic super wicked character? Something like that. That's no protagonist right, a character that made you want to retort like that (in fact, someone retorted like that).
Since it's hard to put an old man a protagonist for a light novel, Kurogane Hayato was a protagonist in his teens.
Hayato being a teenage protagonist, I'm scared thinking of it now. Even though I'm not too good at writing cool characters, there's the limit to protag's adventures.
And therefore, in fact Kusanagi Takeru didn't even exist in early stages.
His model had settled much later you see. Actually Ouka didn't exist either.
Mari, Usagi and Ikaruga's originals existed, but they changed considerably.
Also, Lapis was domineering.
Also the heroine was Oonogi Kanata-san's prototype.
It was Kanata-san.
——That person was the heroine!

Creation's Secret Story 3: "This work had three plans for it."
AntiMagic Academy has for better or worse, a chaotic setting, that's the impression I occasionally receive.
In fact, that's exactly it, even I as the author feel so sometimes... because it was formed from the unification of three plots I had for it.
No wonder it's chaotic! What outrage are you thinking of here! How dare you submit such a thing!
Even now I remember retorting to myself like this
But since a lot happened I started to write and it turned terrible. I can remember that too.
"What'cha'm gonna do..." I held my head after finishing volume one.
And this "What'cha'm gonna do..." continued after second volume.
I had no idea how to continue. There was a lot to reflect upon, but it was worth struggling. I love this work now.

Like that, after many twists and turns it took the form it has now.
No way, I didn't think it would receive an animation, I'm really glad.
It's really moving.
Now, since I have reached the number of pages required, let's write a follow-up for the animation.

Currently, the anime's official website was made and the teaser visual as well as key visuals have been published. Since they're stylish and cool, please take a look! Also, part of the cast has been announced!

In Kusanagi Takeru's role, Hosoya Yoshimasa-san!
In Ootori Ouka's role, Ueda Reina-san!
In Saionji Usagi's role, Ookubo Rumi-san!
In Suginami Ikaruga's role, Shiraishi Ryouko-san!
In Nikaido Mari's role, Itou Kanae-san!
In Lapis' role, Nomizu Iori-san!
In Haunted's role, Yusa Kouji-san!
So luxurious! Since a lot of information will be published from time to time in the future, look forward to it□!

Now then, acknowledgements.
K-sama in charge whom I inconvenience more and more with every volume. Kippu-sama who draws lovely illustrations. Yasumara Youhei-san who draws really powerful action scenes for comic version. All of the anime production's staff. Everyone in Fantasia Bunko's editing section.
And, all the readers who have been together with us up until now, thanks to all of you.
Now, finally the time for fated sibling confrontation and——!

Let's meet again in volume twelve!

Yanagimi Touki

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